

GW's 7th Annual Reunion Picnic Draws a Crowd of Adopters and Dogs

BY BRENDA CURRIN

Nearly 100 adopters and their greyhounds gathered amid the fall foliage of the C&O Canal National Historical Park for games, food, raffles, demonstrations, and lots of butt sniffing at the 7th Annual GW Reunion Picnic. The picnic is always a favorite time to reconnect with other adopters, make new friends, show off new collars and coats, and pet lots of appreciative hounds. Plus it is a great fundraiser for GW.

This year's picnic took place on Halloween and one of the highlights was the creative get-ups some of the hounds wore for the costume contest. We saw a jousting horse, a cowboy, a safari explorer, a DJ, a unicorn and even a very large squirrel. That wasn't the day's only contest though. Others competed in bobbing for hot dogs, best trick, baldest butt, longest nose, biggest overbite, longest tail, shortest tail (for those happy tail victims), and most freckles. New this year was the contest "My Dog Will Eat That" which pitted the most adventurous eaters against each other with such delicacies as marshmallows, pineapple, broccoli, cabbage and lemons.

The picnic isn't all about fun and games though. This year's event included microchipping thanks to Dr. Kellogg from Great Falls Animal Hospital, a nail clipping clinic, and a chiropractic demonstration on Turbo, who was a very willing volunteer, by Dr. Malinda Venegas.

The afternoon wrapped up with the annual raffle fundraiser. Lucky winners took home collars, coats, sweaters, toys, greyhound-related gifts, items from the GW shop, and even a framed rac-

story continues bottom of page 2



in this edition

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT PG 2

WINTER WALKS PG 3
Guide to the Right Gear

GRAPEHOUNDS PG 4
GW Co-Sponsoring Wine Tour in Virginia

LIVING WITH DOGS AND CATS PGS 5-6

THE OPEN HOUSE PG 7
Tips for Creating a Safe and Happy Experience

"NOT" GREYT BITES PG 7

TRACK CLOSINGS PG 8
Need for Foster Homes and GW Awareness

WHAT DID YOUR DOG
GET FOR CHRISTMAS? PG 10

PHOTO CONTEST PGS 11-12
Winter Celebration

Letter from the President: 2009 in Review

BY MEREDITH DOWELL



Meredith poses with her grey, Turbo
(photo by Balance Pet Photography)

Happy New Year to all our Greyhound Welfare adopters, friends and volunteers! With 2009 behind us, it's now time to look forward to bigger and better things. Last year was a difficult one for greyhound adoption on the whole, not just Greyhound Welfare. The poor economy made many people reconsider adopting a dog, however, I am happy to report that our numbers increased over 2008's dismal showing.

In 2009, Greyhound Welfare was able to take 89 dogs off the tracks (in 2008, we were only able to take in 70!). This past year, we expanded our dog sources to include two small operations in West Virginia taking dogs off of the Tri-State and Wheeling tracks. While we have not taken many West Virginia dogs, they remain a good option for us during the sometimes long spell between regular Florida hauls. We also took dogs from an additional Florida source in 2009 to help alleviate the bottlenecks caused by track and kennel closings (see article in this issue). While we probably

will not see numbers that even approach our best year's (150 dogs in 2006), I am optimistic that we should at least be able to take in 100 or more dogs this year.

The bad economy has meant a higher than average number of returns to Greyhound Welfare, as well. In good economy years, we average somewhere along the lines of 10-12 returns per year. However, in the past two years, we have had over 20 (22 in 2009 and 24 in 2008). Many of these returns are economically motivated: people lose housing or get divorces and can no longer afford the expense of having a dog. GW tries to help wherever we can, no matter where the dog came from; we even took in a dog listed on Craigslist that was adopted directly from a trainer in Florida.

We were able to place a total of 94 dogs into adoptive homes over the past year, again, up from 2008's total of 88 placements. At writing, we have 18 dogs in foster care awaiting homes.

While we hope that 2010 will go better in terms of number of dogs we are able to bring in and number of forever homes found (an improving economy will go a long way towards this goal), it is going to be a difficult year for greyhound adoption as tracks close and kennels and farms go out of business, flooding the adoption groups with dogs who have no place to go. We will need all the help we can get. ■

Reunion Picnic, continued from page 1

ing silk used at the Seabrook Greyhound Park, which was donated by Chris Makepeace of the Seabrook REGAP kennel.

Planning, staffing and cleaning up the annual Mid-Atlantic picnic is a major undertaking for GW's volunteers. "[A] huge thanks to the volunteers who helped me pull it off – I certainly didn't

do it alone," GW President Meredith Dowell said in an email after the picnic. "And thanks so much to everyone who came out." ■

Greyhound Welfare Board of Directors

Don Spellmann
CHAIR

Meredith Dowell
VICE-CHAIR

Rikki Tate
TREASURER

Eliza Cioccare
SECRETARY

Jen Boyd-Morin
DIRECTOR

Officers/Coordinators

Meredith Dowell
PRESIDENT & MEDICAL COORDINATOR

Jen Boyd-Morin
FOSTER COORDINATOR

Rikki Tate
ADOPTION COORDINATOR

Jenny Glenn
EVENT COORDINATOR

Nichole Zurgable
SCREENING COORDINATOR

Cynthia Wilber
TRAINING TEAM COORDINATOR

Ryan Hansen
FOLLOW-UP COORDINATOR

Vacant
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

The Skinny on Greyhound Welfare is a quarterly publication of Greyhound Welfare.

Greyhound Welfare is a greyhound rescue and placement group serving the metropolitan Washington D.C area (Maryland, Virginia and DC) and parts of New England (Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Hampshire). Greyhound Welfare is a 100% foster home group, which means that all our greyhounds live in real homes until they are placed. This helps us teach the dogs about their new world, and learn more about the individual dogs. Knowing our dogs well helps us greatly with our placement success.

Newsletter Staff

Tina Carlsen, MANAGING EDITOR

Paige Davis, GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Eliza Cioccare, WRITER

Brenda Currin, WRITER

Additional contributions by
GW adopters and friends.

To submit story and photo ideas, please send an email to twestickdogs@verizon.net

With the Right Gear, Walks Are Still Welcome in the Winter

BY MEREDITH DOWELL

Now that the weather has turned cold, many of us are tempted to stay indoors where it's nice and warm and skip out on the dog walks. The next thing you know, Fido is climbing the walls and trying to entice your poor cats to play out of desperation (OK, so maybe that's just my dog, but still). While it's true that greyhounds don't have a lot of resistance to cold weather, you don't have to skip the walks. With a little common sense and bundling up in the right gear, you can still enjoy long walks with your not-so-furry friend.

Coats

When to use a coat is a matter of some debate and it really depends on your dog. Many of our dogs were whelped or raced in the Midwest or Northeast and spent plenty of time outdoors on the farm and enjoy cold temperatures. Some of these dogs will not want a coat unless it is very cold outside. It has been said that if you need a coat, so does your dog, or, if you need gloves, your dog needs a coat. Unfortunately, there is no hard and fast rule. It is always better to go out with a coat and remove it if the dog starts to get hot than to not have one if he becomes cold.

What kind of coat? There are many kinds of greyhound coats, including rain slickers, light fleece, heavy fleece and combination nylon/fleece coats, among many others. You can get coats that cover the belly or coats that leave the belly open.

You can get coats that fasten with Velcro™ or that have straps that buckle. There seems to be no end to coat styles, colors and fabrics.

Many greyhound owners have fleece coats, which are simple and come in a variety of colors and patterns. The one drawback is that they are not waterproof (though a good quality fleece will roll off some precipitation, it will still get wet). Fleece coats are good for the typical Mid-Atlantic winter (i.e., not that cold) and are fine for non-rainy/snowy days.

If you have a dog that runs hot fairly easily, you may want to look at coats that leave the belly open. A good example of this type of coat is the "horse blanket" style made by Halemar (www.halemar.com). These have straps that keep the coat in place by criss-crossing under the belly (or one strap that fastens around the small of the dog's waist). These coats have a nylon exterior and a sherpa wool-like lining that keeps the dog warm, yet protects against precipitation.

For very cold temperatures and heavy precipitation, your best bet is a coat with a nylon outer shell and fleece lining with a belly protector (especially when the snow is higher than your greyhound's chest!). There are two notable brands of greyhound coats and each has a following. First is the Chilly Dogs coat (www.chillydogs.ca). Their coats feature a sturdy nylon exterior lined with a warm polar fleece and topped off with reflective piping. The Chilly Dog coats feature a belly apron that pulls between the dog's front legs, over the belly and buckles over the dog's back at the waist. It is easy to put on and take off, is



Turbo models a Halemar coat

cut to a greyhound's shape (a male won't pee on it) and allows complete freedom of movement; your dog can easily go full speed in this coat without having to alter his stride. For really cold temperatures, you can also get a matching snood to cover up those ears. Another popular coat is the Voyagers K-9 Apparel (www.k9apparel.com). These coats also feature a heavy-duty nylon exterior and fleece lining. They are cut longer in the back, offering a bit more protection over the thighs. They also feature an easy on/off wide belly strap to keep tummies warm and dry, plus reflective patches on the rear. Really, you can't go wrong with either of these coats – they'll each keep your pet warm and dry. They cost around \$100, but they are well made and long lasting; your dog will likely never need another coat.

There are many coat vendors out there, so be sure to check the Yahoo! Group for a list of recommendations.

Snoods

Many greyhound coats come with detachable snoods. Snoods are little hoods for your greyhound's neck and ears. While many dogs do not like wearing them, a greyhound's ears can get frostbitten easily thanks to thin skin. If it's going to be very cold outside, do use a snood.



There are many kinds of greyhound coats, as seen in this photo.

story continues on page 4

...the Right Gear, continued from page 3

To Boot or Not to Boot?

Most dogs are perfectly fine without boots, particularly when there is no snow. However, when snow falls, some dogs just can't stand getting it between their toes and would prefer to have some protection on their feet. For those dogs, boots are an option, however, you'll need to keep in mind those skinny greyhound legs. Do not waste your time or money on boots bought in your local pet stores – they simply will not stay on greyhound legs. Muttluks will fall off your dog's feet the second he picks up any speed greater than a slow walk. If you buy boots for your greyhound, there are a few options.

Therapaws are made for dogs with foot problems such as corns, but they also work great as a winter boot. At about \$20 per boot, they fit well and stay on well.

Another option are the boots made by K-9 Apparel specifically for greyhound feet and legs. They purportedly stay on well, featuring fasteners around the dog's wrist and higher up on the legs for added security.

You may have to acclimate your dog to wearing boots. He may at first high step or even refuse to move. Keep him moving and next thing you know, he'll be wagging his tail at the sight of the boots, knowing it means walk time!

Don't forget the pads!

Between the dry, hot air in our homes and the chemicals put out for de-icing streets, our dogs' paws can take a beating. Whenever you come inside from a walk after the street has been salted or de-iced, make sure you wash your dogs' feet to rid him of any irritants. Also, to prevent the pads from cracking, rub a little Bag Balm on them. Bag Balm can be found at any drug store, Target or Walmart.

Don't forget to play it safe: if you're walking at night, make sure you and your dog are wearing reflective gear and/or carrying a flashlight so you can be seen by motorists.

Remember that while it may seem cold out, once you are out and moving at a good clip, you'll warm up quickly. So get bundled up and walk your dog – it'll save you both some cabin fever. ■

GW Co-Sponsoring Grapehounds Wine Tour in Northern VA

BY ELIZA CIOCCARI

EVENT

Grapehounds-Virginia
(a.k.a. *The Grapehound Wine Tour — Virginia 2010*)

DATES

May 14-16, 2010

COST

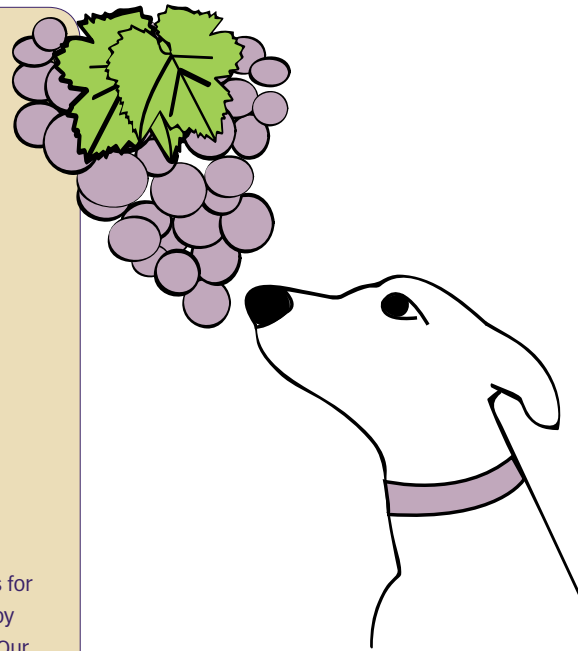
\$20 per ticket

LOCATION

Several wineries in northern Virginia near Leesburg

DESCRIPTION

Wine tasting and greyhound vendors for greyhound owners who want to enjoy northern Virginia wineries in spring. Our hotels are waiving pet fees and giving us group rates.



Mark your calendars for the weekend of May 14th. The man who put together the New York Grapehounds Wine Tour has done it again, but this time the event will be in Northern Virginia.

Greyhound Welfare, along with several other local greyhound adoption groups, will be co-sponsoring this event to bring greyhounds and wine together for a fun-filled weekend. Preliminary details for the event are below, so please mark your calendars and tell all of your friends and family to come out. The more people we bring in the more money we can raise, so tell everyone to come out and support us.

Plans so far include a welcome get-together on Friday evening, wine tasting and vendors all day Saturday, and a site tour and walk at Sky Meadows State Park on Sunday. More details to come

All attendees will receive a commemorative wine glass with a unique Grapehounds Virginia 2010 design, and for this event, you will be able to choose which sponsor group gets a designated portion of your ticket proceeds. As with all Grapehound events, all proceeds after expenses are divided among the participating greyhound adoption groups.

For more information on the event please go to: <http://www.grapehounds.com/virginia.htm> and feel free to e-mail me directly at eciocarri@yahoo.com. ■

Living With Dogs & Cats

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CYNTHIA WILBER

Consider 'Hope,' aptly named but not by me. The bonding started when she climbed the headliner in my car on our way home from the haul. It continued as she bounced and smiled her way around the yard for the first time, and then gamely took on the steep kitchen steps to the house. Inside I lifted her front paw for a clip and discovered a cooperative dog and no dew claws (yay!). Katie, the happiest dog in the world, had died four months earlier and the household needed a crazy sunshine girl again. Hope had arrived. Monty and Dannie did the greeting dance with her and no one snarked. And then Audrey the cat made her operatic entrance.

There's been a long line, five years worth, of foster greyhounds passing through my home and three greyhounds of my own before Hope. Katie and Monty were cat comatose — Katie stepping over Mikey the cat on her first entrance to the house as if he were a bump on the rug. Monty



had lived with cats in his first home, and now slept with them in mine. There have been foster dogs over the years with a little too much interest in kitties but still distractible and workable, and a few who were fearful of the cats. Dannie was more of a challenge, but her interest in the kitties was play not prey. She'll still race a cat down the hall some mornings but is safe with them inside. Hope was very different. She lunged on the lead whenever she saw the cat and Audrey would zip under the baby gate to safety. Hope's eyes followed and she held her position. She was going to take a lot more patience and work to live well with cats.

Management tools:

- Crate
- Muzzle
- Leash
- High value treats (hot dog bits, liver, cheese, real chicken)

Escape routes for kitty:

- Baby Gates installed 8" to 10" above the floor
- Single pane of glass removed from French doors to inside rooms
- Cat doors to basement or to safe rooms
- Patience and TIME (in months, not days or weeks)

Cat training is pretty straightforward: A play muzzle (never a cloth muzzle) and a short lead when out of the crate keeps everyone safe. Then distract the dog when she looks at the cat, mark the behavior (clicker or 'good girl') when she looks away, and reward with high value treats. **Since behaviors that are reinforced will be repeated, it's important not to allow a situation where the dog could chase the kitty and be rewarded by the thrill of the chase.** But that's exactly what happened in Month 3 with Hope and Audrey. I let my guard down thinking Audrey was in the cellar patrolling for mice when Hope was out of the crate before dinner. I hadn't bothered to close the baby gate to the kitchen and I heard the scuffle of claws trying to gain traction on the floor. By the time I turned around they were gone. Hope had Audrey trapped behind the toilet. Even wearing a muzzle, a dog can pick up toys or kitty, so we were relieved that no one was hurt. Muzzles also offer some protection from those needle-like cat claws.

After more than six months, with controls and training and vigilance, Hope learned to ignore the cat in most situations. I don't think I'll ever find her curled up with the cat, but they can be in the same room safely. Audrey can run into the room yowling and Hope barely lifts her head. Until the recent holidays, I still gated Hope on one level when I left the house. But after 14 months I think

story continues on page 6

Dogs and Cats, continued from page 5

we're safe, and she now has run of the house when I'm gone.

There are still situations with cats and greys that will always need to be monitored, even with the most cat-comatose or well-trained grey.

Danger Zones

Outdoors. Greyhounds instinctively follow movement. Most greys will chase and could easily kill any small animal running in the yard, even the same cats that they live with indoors.

At the door to the outside. This is a transition zone where dogs may still be in prey mode from a heightened state of excitement in the yard. If the cat is at the door, warn her away or muzzle the dogs before entering.

Inside when dogs are over excited from playing with toys. I remove my kitty from the room if the dogs are having a wild stuffy tossing party. Any situation where the dogs are over-stimulated brings with it the possibility of 'playing' with and hurting a cat.

In your arms. Holding a kitty **above** a dog's head is especially dangerous in the beginning. Many dogs who would ignore a cat on the floor will jump up for the cat in your arms.

After the honeymoon. Some greys will ignore or show little interest in cats for the first few

months in a new home. Left unsupervised too early (before six months) could result in disaster. Crate or gate the dog until you're willing to bet

your cat's life on the dog, because that's exactly what you're doing. ■

Trixie joins the ranks of cat-friendly dogs after nearly 8 months training

BY ELIZA CIOCCARI

Last March, we lost our beloved Cookie to Osteosarcoma, so in May we took in our first foster since Cookie became sick. Her name is Trixie, and she dazzled us with her personality and charm. We were ready to adopt her, but she was having one problem – the cat. I am not new to greyhounds, but greyhounds and cats were a new experience for me. Our family added a cat to our home when my boyfriend and his cat Oliver moved in right about the time Trixie came into foster care. Until that point it had just been Cookie, Chase (Cookie's littermate), and myself.

After spending the first few weeks barking at Oliver I could tell that Trixie was going to take a bit of time and training to adjust. It didn't take long for us to be able to distract her and get her to pay attention to us while she was crated and the cat was out, but outside of the crate was a different story.

Outside of the crate Trixie was always muzzled and leashed. We continued with her training and saw gradual improvements. Eventually Oliver was able to come out to the living room while Trixie was on her dog bed. I would sit next to her with treats while my boyfriend sat far enough away for the cat to come to him and not be too close to Trixie. Every time Trixie paid attention to me she would get a treat. Eventually, when she saw the cat she would look at us like, "Hey, where is my treat?"

We took things VERY slowly and made sure that Trixie was always muzzled and leashed until we could trust that she would not chase after the cat. It took three to four months for her to finally be able to be unleashed (still muzzled), because we could call her away from Oliver when she saw him. We continued this way for several more months: taking it slow and continuing with her training/positive reinforcement. Eventually one day Oliver and Trixie were standing next to each other in the hallway. We had finally made it.

It took us 7 months and 28 days for Trixie to finally be muzzle- and leash-free. Today she actually gave Oliver kisses (much to Oliver's dismay). Trixie has come such a LONG way since she first came into our home on May 9, 2009. We are so proud of the progress she has made. When we adopted Trixie I thought it would take her a year to be safe with Oliver, so the fact that we were able to do it in less than eight months seems to be even more of a success. This just goes to show you that if you put in the training and be patient you too can make it work. Some greyhounds just take a little more work than others when it comes to cats. ■



Tips for Creating a Safe and Happy Open House Experience

BY JENNY GLENN

Feeling a little cooped up in the house due to the weather? Come on out and visit an upcoming Greyhound Welfare open house. All greyhounds are welcome at Greyhound Welfare open houses and events.

Open houses are excellent places for greyhounds to learn about this strange new world called "retirement." Endless treats at nose level! Delightful smells! Buttering up the public with those soft brown eyes and oh-so-warm fur and getting tons of attention! Did someone mention treats?

Open houses also bring special challenges. Some challenges, like slippery linoleum floors, are predictable and manageable (and occasionally very amusing). Other challenges can lead to drama, trauma, and very scary episodes. Open houses in public often include:

- Foster greyhounds and ambassadors
- Congested, crowded spaces with poor sight lines
- Unattended small dogs, frequently on long Flexi leads and out of sight of their owners
- Cats in shopping carts and parakeets on fingers
- Unleashed, unattended human children waving food, laser pointers, and squeaky toys in the greyhounds' faces

We can keep our greyhounds safe and sound by learning to see our surroundings through our dogs' eyes. We have several important jobs that keep the good times rolling for our houndies:

- **Watch the entrance area for incoming challenges.** Step in front of and/or politely guide people with small dogs or cats away from our group (yes, people with cats in their arms or a bird on their finger have walked directly through the center of the greyhound pack).
- **Watch our greyhound's body language.** Ears up, staring, whining, straining at the leash? Take the dog outside for a cool off walk. If the dog gets really amped up, don't be surprised if that tension gets released through a bite at

another nearby greyhound. The bite will probably catch an ear, and much dramatic (human) shrieking and messy (greyhound) bleeding will occur.

- **Listen for growling or whining.** Someone's stress level is on the rise. Find the stressed dog, distract with treats, muzzle (so they can't bite on the way out), and take outside for a potty walk for five minutes or so.
- **Use the turn-out muzzle.** If your dog is really excited by everything going on, use the muzzle! It is an opportunity to educate people about what a turn-out muzzle is. The dog will appreciate the steady stream of training treats used to show each person how the greyhound "can even eat while wearing the muzzle". If a member of the public is rude about muzzling, tell them the dog did not bring a credit card today and was caught shoplifting.

Thanks to an observant owner (and a pocket of tasty training treats), your greyhound can enjoy a fine afternoon among friends and go home exhausted, to dream the afternoon away. Looking forward to seeing you in 2010! ■



NOT Greyt Bites

BY TINA CARLSEN

Our dogs love their treats. In past editions of The Skinny on GW, we've shared some yummy recipes. This time, the focus is on what our dogs **should not eat**. Following are some of the no-no's: Chocolate, walnuts and macadamia nuts, raw garlic, tea, coffee and other caffeinated or cola-type drinks, grapes raisins, sultanas, some mushrooms, cat food, raw eggs, raw potato, yeast dough, alcoholic beverages, milk and other dairy products, avocado, pits from plums and peaches, persimmons, onions, salt and sugary foods.

Some of these foods are poisonous, while others may cause upset tummies. If you think your dog has eaten something toxic, call for help immediately.

If you feed your dog a raw diet, be vigilant about proper food handling and hygiene, otherwise, raw meat and eggs may spread the salmonella or e. coli. bacteria.

It's a good idea to keep the number of your local veterinarian, the closest emergency clinic and the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center — (888) 426-4435 handy. You can order a free pet safety pack from the ASPCA website at <http://www.aspc.org/pet-care/poison-control/>. The pack includes a magnet with this number printed on it.

Rise in track closings creates dire need for foster homes, GW awareness

BY MEREDITH DOWELL

In 2009, race tracks closed in Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Arizona. While anti-racing activists have applauded the closures, the reality on the ground is a bit more complicated. Greyhound Welfare, as a racing-neutral group, has no stance on the track closures. However, it is a fact that any time a track closes, every remaining track in the country, and consequently every adoption group, is affected. To understand the implications of a track closure, it is necessary to understand the mechanics of the racing industry itself.

Dog Owners and Kennel Operators — One and the Same?

The answer is no, not necessarily. Racing greyhounds are bred and whelped on either farms or small home-based operations, depending on the size of the breeder. As the pups mature, they may be sold, trained on-site or sent to other farms to train. Once they are ready for the track, they may be sold, sent to a race kennel owned by the breeder or owner (who may or may not be the same person or entity), or leased out to a racing kennel (kennel space is leased from the track where it is located). Thus, a trainer may run a kennel that is comprised of dogs that belong to him, which he may have bred or bought, along with dogs that are leased to him by other race owners. An owner pays the expenses of keeping the dog in the kennel and splits any profits that the dog makes with the trainer. There may be anywhere between 10 and 15 kennels on the track grounds, with 70 to 80 crates in any one particular race kennel and a total of 600 to 1,100 dogs on site. The leases held by kennel owners from the track generally require that a certain number of active racers be in the race kennel at any given time; therefore, there is generally not a lot of extra space for dogs that need to be held before being moved out to adoption. Race kennels must move these dogs in order to maintain

the proper amount of active racers (and to keep space open for any dogs that may be recuperating from minor injuries or illness or schooling back into racing).

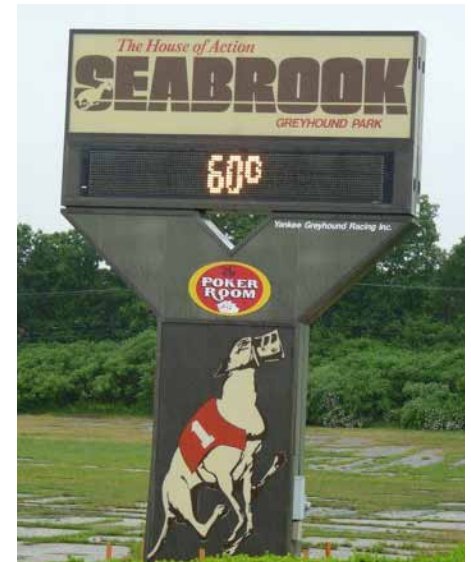
Racetracks

Each track is independently operated and governed by state laws having jurisdiction over the tracks. Rules and regulations concerning greyhounds can vary widely state-by-state and are promulgated by both local and state authorities. Since the passage of Question 3 in Massachusetts outlawing racing in that state, there is now live greyhound racing in only seven states (Arizona, Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Iowa, Texas and West Virginia).

While there is no set ranking of tracks, those that have the higher purses attract higher performing dogs and develop reputations as good tracks. This may be fluid — Wonderland was once considered one of the best tracks in the country, but when it ceased racing operations last fall, it was considered a mediocre track. Today, Wheeling Island in Wheeling, WV, is considered the top track in the country.

Not All Races Are Created Equal: Understanding Grades

Each track runs separate grades of races, with A or AA being the highest grade of daily racing and usually going down to D. Special races, known as stakes races (and usually denoted with an S on the racing program) offer much higher purses and feature the best of the best. Below D, most tracks have training and schooling races which are used to assess a dog's ability or to allow it to school into a particular grade after an injury or lay-off. These races do not offer purses. A dog has to work its way up to the higher grades, and will usually begin dropping grades at some point in its career until it grades off of that particular track. A young dog just arriving at the track will run schooling races, then run maidens (sometimes called M races). Exceptional dogs may win their maiden race then school in for a higher grade, such as B or C. However, in most cases, when the dog wins its maiden race, it advances



to Grade D. When it wins Grade D, it advances to C, and so on. A dog must be in the top four places in its grade within 3 or 4 (depending on track rules) races or it drops grade. In other words, the dog doesn't need to win, it just must be in the top four finishers (or "in the money") to maintain its grade. If a dog cannot maintain its grade at one track, the kennel or owner may opt to send the dog to a lesser track where the competition is not as difficult to see if the dog can continue its career there. If the dog continues to drop in grades, the dog will be retired and typically put into adoption channels or returned to the farm for breeding. It should be noted, however, that only the cream of the crop (or, for females at least, the cream of the bloodlines) will be returned for breeding, so the number that goes back to farms is comparatively small.

How Does Any of This Affect Adoption?

Over the past decade or so, greyhound adoption groups have been able to absorb approximately 80 to 90 percent of the dogs coming off the tracks due to retirement or injury (New England tracks reportedly had attained 100 percent adoption for quite some time; Florida, the state with the most race tracks and therefore the most dogs coming off the track, has a smaller

story continues on page 9

Track Closings, continued from page 8

percentage). Kennel closings (where a race kennel goes out of business leaving anywhere between 40 and 80 dogs in need of placement) do place a strain on adoption, however, most are manageable. Even the occasional track closing (where 600-1,000 dogs had to be moved, with approximately 200 to 300 into adoption channels) could be managed as well, though with a bit more urgency. A higher end track (such as Raynham) may have 5 to 10 dogs per kennel that need to be "petted out," whereas a lower end track (such as Dairyland) may have 20 to 30 dogs per kennel that need to go to adoption. Typically, when a track closes, the groups closest to that track work overtime to move out all the dogs. Six tracks closing within months of each other, however, is incredibly difficult to manage. Such a large number of dogs that wouldn't have otherwise gone into adoption until they were ready to grade off, in addition to the usual attrition, causes an enormous strain. It's a bit like trying to fill a one pound bag full of two pounds of coffee beans; when capacity is reached, the rest of the beans have nowhere to go.

For example, if dogs from Raynham (a lower high-level/high mid-level track) are sent to a track such as Daytona (lower mid-level track), because Raynham was a better track with more talented racers, the incoming dogs will push out those dogs at Daytona who are not as competitive. The dogs pushed out of Daytona, in turn, are either moved into the already clogged Florida

adoption channels, or shuttled to even lower level tracks, pushing out under-performing dogs at those tracks. Additionally, since dog racing is no longer as lucrative as it once was, farms and kennels regularly go out of business, placing even more dogs into the adoption pool. The displacement of dogs is immense and adoption groups are dealing with a very heavy burden. No one wants to tell race owners or kennels that they cannot take their retired dogs, however, there is only so much kennel space. GPA Daytona regularly has approximately 200 dogs in their adoption kennel at the best of times. Now they are being overrun. A similar situation is taking place on Florida's gulf coast, with Dairyland dogs coming into the Ebro track displacing the less competitive dogs there and flooding adoption groups such as Emerald Coast. So, while it is true that dogs are being moved out of the closed tracks and none of those dogs is in danger of euthanasia, there is a huge ripple effect throughout the racetrack system. The bottom line is that there are only so many crates available in race kennels and adoption kennels.

So What Does This Mean for Greyhound Welfare?

Greyhound Welfare has two chapters, one in New England (greater Boston area) and one in the Mid-Atlantic (greater Washington, DC, metro area). GW's NE chapter, due to Massachusetts laws concerning the importation of dogs, had been taking dogs exclusively from Raynham and Wonderland through Linda Jensen. Once the dogs have all gone from Raynham (they have already

gone from Wonderland), it is likely that GW will no longer be able to place dogs in NE, except for any return dogs from either our own or other adoption groups unless some sort of quarantine facility can be obtained. In the short term, however, foster homes are greatly needed to help place those dogs that are still at Raynham.

In the Mid-Atlantic, we are in critical need of foster homes. Since we do not have a kennel, the only way we can help stem the flow of dogs in Florida is to bring them into foster care in the DC area, eventually placing them into loving adoptive homes. Dogs from six tracks are inundating the tracks in Florida, so the situation is serious. We would like to continue to take large hauls from Daytona, as well as auxiliary hauls from other areas of Florida and West Virginia. We cannot do this without an adequate number of foster homes.

What Can You Do?

Obviously, our most important need is foster homes. Greyhound Welfare pays all foster expenses, including food and vet care. If you cannot foster, you can help raise awareness of Greyhound Welfare by volunteering for our events, or you can assist us with adoption screening, such as phone screens, reference checks and home visits. There are many different ways, big and small, to contribute. If you can't volunteer, you can spread the word about what wonderful pets greyhounds make, and possibly encourage others to adopt. Finally, donating to Greyhound Welfare or other groups such as GPA Daytona helps insure that these groups will have the resources to continue to take dogs off the track and have them vetted and cared for until adoption.

The next several months will be difficult ones for adoption groups as the aftershocks of the track closings continue to ripple through the remaining racetracks and adoption kennels. We hope that with your help, and the continued assistance of our current, wonderful volunteers, we will be able to weather the closings and place many more dogs into adoptive homes. ■



What Did Your Dog Get for Christmas?

There were lots of happy hounds this holiday season. Take a look at what some of our needle nose friends received:

Auggie got a new pair of fleece jammies and a shiny new collar.

Bella's early present was a holiday sweater with a hoodie. Her late Christmas present was a "new to the family" Ford Escape Hybrid. Bella's parents said she had been complaining about needing a roomier backseat. Rumor has it that Bella is asking for a house with a yard for her birthday. We'll have to see on that one.

Howie and **Fly** got a road kill fox and a possum.

Chase got some bully sticks and bully springs and **Trixie** got a new cow, an elf, a whale, and a pig (toys). Trixie LOVES toys and destroys them faster than her mom can replace them. Chase on the other hand would rather have food.

Marley got a pillow shaped like a bone.

Eddie and **Abby** got red and green tag bags and fleece jammies.

Irene received a squeaky snowman, a hand-knit sweater, and the company of Jasper (greyhound) and Lucy (Chow mix), our furry houseguests for the holidays

Gipper (a.k.a. Grid Iron) got monkey pajamas, a new winter coat and some toys from us and from his "grandparents."

India and **Kashu's** mom went crazy and made them 11 fleece jammies each. She also made them each bolstered crate pads.

Willy (formerly Payne) received Cleo, a stuffed animal leopard "skin" rug. Since his family's first greyhound, Spike, died last year, Willy has looked for comfort wherever he could. Although



Willy and "Cleo"

he probably "clings" to his humans more than before, he has taken comfort with his new friend, Cleo. When Willy needs comfort, he goes and lays on Cleo. He has attempted to drag her out to the backyard and even take her on one of his walks. True love!

Maggie received a monogrammed Christmas stocking, a squeaky toy and a trip to Texas to see family.

Mary, Queen for Life, got cow tail chews and a squeaky cow toy.

Anna (formerly Miss Lasagna) received a very long rubber dog that squeaks no matter where you squeeze it. Her mom says Anna must think it came from another planet because she just leaves it near her main bed, watches it carefully, and doesn't touch it. If she does inadvertently make it squeak, she jumps away. She also received a bright green, very long and

floppy tossing dog with squeakers at each end, which is her favorite. Anna runs and tosses it back and forth across two floors of the house.

Smokie, Tanner and houseguest **Oliver** received KONG BraidZ Toys — Tiger, Monkey and Giraffe. Tiger was decapitated; monkey is still intact; and giraffe was eviscerated. The squeakers? Gone; gone; gone.

Wiki got a new dog bed, some rawhide chews shaped like candy canes, and some dog biscuits.

Clara-Bell, Dreamie and **Liberty** each received a new bed, a couple of stuffies and lots of treats. Johnny, the Yorkie who thinks he's a greyhound, sleeps on the big beds. He received a stuffie and treats.

■

Winter 2010 Photo Contest Winners: Winter Celebration!

Thanks to everyone who emailed or posted photos as part of our photo contest. For all of the photo contest entries, visit Yahoo! Groups GW Adopter site. Look in the photos folder, *Newsletter Winter 2010*. Get out those cameras and watch your email for announcements about upcoming photo contests!



First Place Winner: Cleo (photo courtesy of Jess and Ataul Ahmad)



Third Place Winner:
Bella (photo courtesy of Aly and Dario Tirado)



Second Place Winner: Gipper (photo courtesy of Gina Venskus)



Honorable Mention: Oliver (photo courtesy of Sylvan and Krista Gillich)

Winter 2010 Photo Contest Outtakes



Dannie and Itchy
(photo courtesy of Cynthia Wilber)



Dreamie, Liberty, Clara and Johnny
(photo courtesy of Tom and Marge Rosso)



Chase and Trixie
(photo courtesy of Eliza Cioccarri)



Ruby (photo courtesy of
Daniel Black and Jim Downing)



Cross and Harley
(photo courtesy of Steve Nash)



Cian (photo courtesy of Nichole Zurgable)



Branford Marsalis
(photo courtesy of Connie Brown)



Maggie
(photo courtesy of Erika and Roberto Ruiz)



Polly and Grace
(photo courtesy of Ryan Hansen)