



SPOTLIGHT ON RESCUE

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We are pleased to welcome guest columnist Donna Baker of Delaware Valley Golden Retriever Rescue as she describes for us a recent story of rescue and the networking that made it happen.

Just the Right Number of Cooks – A Rescue Collaboration

by Donna Baker

Remember the old adage, “Too many cooks spoil the broth?” Often true. But in a recent transport of 11 Golden Retrievers from Arkansas to Pennsylvania, a lot of “cooks” worked superbly in tandem to whip up one heckuva successful rescue!

Here in Reinholds, PA, home of Delaware Valley Golden Retriever Rescue (DVGRR), our first knowledge of the events transpiring over 1,000 miles away in Arkansas came via a phone call from Phyl Simmons, of Memphis Area Golden Retriever Rescue (MAGRR). We’ve worked collaboratively on many occasions in the past with MAGRR, so Phyl is well acquainted with our rescue and its capabilities.

MAGRR had just received a call for help with a multi-dog intake on an “asap” basis. Phyl knew that “asap” part would be difficult for her to achieve using her foster care network and thought DVGRR might be in a better position to jump in given our on-site kennel facility and previous experience with high number intakes.

We were more than glad to help and started the figurative

[tennis] ball rolling right away. Our Kennel Manager, Dennis Stauffer, got the contact information from Phyl and immediately called Dorinda Hankins, President of Harley’s Hope, Inc., a small but very determined dog rescue/sanctuary in Harrison, Arkansas. We learned that Dorinda had been working tirelessly with folks from Ozark Homeward Bound (another local rescue group) to provide emergency on-site care for thirty-two dogs, five horses, two cats, one pot-bellied pig, and assorted fish – all left to fend for themselves since early February when the family that owned them became embroiled in a domestic dispute and were evicted from the home. Besides Golden Retrievers, the canine breeds represented included Labrador Retrievers, Great Pyrenees, German Shepherds, and Beagles.

Starting With the Basics

Dorinda told us the conditions at the home were *awful* and nearly all of the dogs were very underweight, many with untreated infections and other health issues as well. Water



A hungry male Golden in Arkansas shows his empty dish, begging for some food.



A cluttered house and garage was where these dogs lived.



“Please get me out of here.”

Spotlight on Rescue, *continued*

and electric service had been turned off more than six months earlier. The Arkansas team established three priorities: ensuring the dogs were safe, obtaining legal authority to remove them, and seeking other resources to help place them. (Neither of the small Arkansas groups was equipped to take so many animals at once, much as they would have liked to!)

The first priority (ensuring safety) presented some logistical challenges, but the two rescues attacked them head on. For almost two weeks, volunteers drove 80 miles roundtrip every day to bring food and water for the dogs and other animals. "We used over 800 pounds of dog food, taken mostly from Harley's Hope and Ozark Homeward Bound, which really came close to wiping us out," Dorinda told us. The groups also arranged for deworming, vaccinations, antibiotics, and other medical care to be administered where needed.

Working in conjunction with Boone County Sheriff Mike Moore, the two rescues successfully obtained legal possession of the animals. Big relief all around, but no time to rest or celebrate – the search for places to take the animals was well underway and needed to be finalized pronto!

Communication, Cooperation, and a Little Comic Relief

Dorinda acknowledges she initially thought that moving 32 dogs to various rescues in a short period of time would be nearly impossible. Happily, things fell into place far more easily than expected. Regular contact with all parties involved made a huge difference. "We could not have done it without the *great* communication from the Northeast rescues," Dorinda noted. "They kept us updated on what we needed to do for them and what they could do for us. It was just nice to hear from DVGRR's Dennis and his kind, calm voice at the end of the day."

First to be relocated were the horses, pot-bellied pig, fish, and two dogs. Three of the horses were taken in by a local horse rescue and the rest of that initial group will stay permanently with a volunteer from Harley's Hope. After tons of phone calls, e-mails, and late night strategizing, plans came together for DVGRR to take the eleven Golden Retrievers, Labs 4 Rescue to take the seven Labs, and National Great Pyrenees Rescue to take the five Pyrs. DVGRR agreed to house the five Great Pyrenees overnight until the Pyr rescue

folks could pick them up, saving those volunteers significant travel time. (Actually, it turned out to be more than five Pyrs, but no one knew that at the time. More on that later...!)

Again, everyone's willingness to work collaboratively made the planning and decision-making process run far more smoothly than anticipated.

The comic relief? Well, that came in the form of "Mimi," the pot-bellied pig. Dorinda says she's sure the man who hauled the horses and pig from the house "thought we were a bunch of city folks trying to load Mimi. She was not going for it at all. She knocked into the President of Ozark Homeward Bound a couple of times at full speed." Thankfully, everyone survived – both physically and emotionally!

A Critical Ingredient – Transportation!

So now the rescues were lined up, but how to get the Golden Retrievers and Great Pyrenees halfway across the country? Enter Barbara Mattson, President of the Great Pyrenees Rescue. She knew of Jeff Sweeney, who operates Yes I Can Transport, a small animal delivery service with a solid reputation. Jeff had just returned from a 10,000-mile trip and had planned to take a week off when he got the call about helping with the Arkansas dogs. He didn't hesitate to join the team of "cooks" and assured everyone he had the capability of handling the transport, including a vehicle that could negotiate the twisty-windy access road leading to the property in rural Boone County where the dogs were located

Five days after the rescue programs took legal possession of the dogs, the transport departed. Jeff's wife, Debbie, kept in touch with him throughout the trip and provided regular e-mail updates to all involved regarding his ETA and the status of the precious cargo.

In Pennsylvania, DVGRR staff began gearing up for the influx of new dogs, preparing files, kennels, and a surplus of extra TLC!

Add a Little Seasoning...

Right on schedule, Jeff and the 16 dogs pulled into Golden Gateway on a February afternoon. All four-legged passengers handled the trip like troopers, and they took their entry into DVGRR's "half-way home" facility in stride as well. We set about the task of getting to know each of these sweet



The truck from Arkansas arrives in Pennsylvania.



Some very fearful Golden Retrievers needed carrying from the truck.



Volunteer Lisa greets a Golden just off the truck.

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Heather Hatt, a DVGRR staff member, and a Golden greet each other.



Dennis Stauffer of DVGG exercises a Great Pyrenees after the long trip.



A senior Golden settling in at DVGRR.

Goldens better so we could start thinking about matching them with new homes! Having announced the imminent arrival of the "ARK 11" (as we dubbed them) in a mass e-mail update, we already had adopters contacting us to express interest in adding one of these dogs to their family once ready.

The transport cost from Arkansas to Pennsylvania was pretty steep but as with the rest of this story, the joint efforts of many groups and individuals united to make it possible. Financial support (i.e., the seasoning for the "broth") came from both Arkansas rescue groups (who somehow found the time to solicit donations while coordinating the care of the dogs and the overall rescue operation!), Memphis Area Golden Retriever Rescue (who wanted to support the effort monetarily after referring the dogs to DVGRR), and from several very generous individual DVGRR donors.

Given that our costs for the ARK 11 included not only their transportation but also the daily care, spay/neuter of all dogs, and other medical treatment (several were in need of extensive dental care, for example), we are incredibly grateful for this amazing support and assistance!



A Great Pyr and her pups born four days after arriving at a Great Pyrenees Rescue Foster Home.

A True Example of Teamwork

We've been delighted with the ARK 11, who are truly a group of resilient Goldens. Despite all they've been through, they are progressing well and made their public debut at a DVGRR's March "Meet and Greet the Goldens Day" (our monthly Open House and adoption event). There was a constant flow of visitors wanting to meet them, and quite a few prospective adopters who succumbed to their charms. Our Adoption Team is starting the process now of matching each Golden with a home that will continue the process of keeping them safe, secure, and very loved.

We had fun getting to know the group of Great Pyrenees too, if only for their short overnight stay at Golden Gateway. And, we are relieved that Madison, one of the adult females, timed her special "surprise" for *after* she was safely in the care of Great Pyrenees Rescue. What surprise was that, you ask? Oh, just a litter of five puppies born four days after arriving in Pennsylvania. Madison's pregnancy was not obvious and therefore went undetected, so thankfully she did not deliver while traveling to Pennsylvania or while temporarily in the custody of DVGRR. We wish mama and pups all the best!

Teamwork is so often the key to success in animal welfare situations and that was certainly the case here. Thanks to a special group of dog lovers all coming together in a pinch, none of these canine survivors will ever be neglected, forgotten, or mistreated again. We are deeply grateful to all who played a role in making this happen:

- Memphis Area Golden Retriever Rescue
- Harley's Hope, Inc.
- Ozark Homeward Bound LLC
- National Great Pyrenees Rescue
- Boone County Sheriff Mike Moore

In reflecting on the rescue, Dorinda Hankins noted: "At no time did we worry about anything except the animals and their needs. Once it was over we just took a deep breath and said, now we will take inventory of what is left." Yes, many resources were used to make this happen, but the canine lives saved, the relationships forged, and the mutual sense of accomplishment are truly a testament to the rescue spirit. Soup's on! ❖