

SPOTLIGHT ON RESCUE



by: Carol Allen, Chair
 National Rescue Committee
 (315) 469-7926
 E-mail: carosal@twcny.rr.com

Discarded Golden Becomes Hero

Golden Bond Rescue of Oregon was founded in 1990 by one woman who single-handedly rescued 14 dogs that year. Currently Golden Bond has over 140 volunteers and rescued 139 Golden Retrievers and Golden-mixes in 2002. The rescue organization works closely with the local humane societies, shelters, veterinarians and businesses to reach out to people with Golden Retrievers that need to be placed and potential adopters. The extensive network of volunteers in Oregon and southwest Washington allows for successful fostering and placement of the dogs.

This is a story about "Maggie," a.k.a. "Ivy," a.k.a. Golden Bond Rescue #211, a.k.a. "Kismet," a.k.a. "Kizzy." This sweet puppy had the bad luck of ending up in the humane society in December, a very busy time of year. Golden Bond Rescue received a call from the humane society asking us to pick up two older Golden puppies because they were overloaded. Maggie went to her foster home just three days before Christmas (along with the other puppy), and became Ivy, Golden Bond #211.

Once in Golden Bond Rescue, Patty, Ivy's foster mom, immediately noticed that this was one smart puppy! Estimated to be about seven or eight months old, Ivy quickly learned simple commands and showed her love for retrieving. Patty noticed that she would retrieve anything, even keys and other metal

objects. Ivy's intelligence was revealed when the foster home installed a new swinging gate at the top of their basement stairs. She immediately figured out how to open it, as the four other resident Golden Retrievers stood and watched! Patty has fond memories of Ivy. "We only had her a short time, but what a sweet dog! She was very sure of herself. She was really special."

As Patty was getting to know Ivy, she was giving reports to Diana, Golden Bond's adoption coordinator. Diana had worked with Canine Assistance Partners (CAP) before, and when she heard that Ivy rode an elevator with no fear, she started to think that this Golden might have a higher calling. After hearing additional reports about Ivy's intelligence, her desire to please and her obsession with retrieving, she made the call to Nancy McDowell of CAP, who then arranged for Ivy's foster parents to take her to a Fred Meyer store for evaluation. While Patty and her husband nervously



"Kismet" gives Susan increased responsibility for her own life and a sense of pride from her skilled and wonderful dog.

waited outside, a CAP volunteer took Ivy up and down the aisles. The Golden's reaction to obstacles, people, scary objects (shopping carts!) and other distractions was noted. She passed with flying colors. Golden Bond Rescue donated Ivy to CAP, and in January 2002 she started the training that would change her life – and someone else's!

CAP is an all-volunteer organization, working on a shoestring budget. Sixty percent or more of their dogs come from rescues or shelters. They count on these donations from rescues and breeders to

Spotlight On Rescue, continued

keep their program going. When Golden Bond donated Ivy, she became Kismet or Kizzy. She had lots of energy, the kind that can be a problem if left in a “pet home.” Kismet needed something to *do* with that energy. She needed to channel that energy and learn to focus on people instead of herself. Since she was naturally curious about people, they knew she could do it. Early in Kizzy’s training period with CAP, however, she showed signs of food and dog aggression. Nancy of CAP calls these Kismet’s “warts” and says she went into an intensive training period to deal with these issues before moving on to the other socialization. Kismet was put with dogs that would show no signs of dog aggression. This was where she learned to trust, not fear, her own species. At times she was harnessed to a larger dog for training.

Over the next nine months, two CAP volunteers worked with Kismet on her training to be a service dog. When they took her into the program, they had a teenager with cerebral palsy in mind for this smaller-than-average Golden. Nancy thinks a lot of Kismet’s success came from training with a toddler in one of the volunteer homes. This taught Kismet to take commands from someone incapable of enforcing them. The training brings out the parental instinct in dogs and allows them to assume a caretaker role. CAP spends \$15,000 on aver-

age to train one of their service dogs. And training continues during the duration of the partnership.

We are happy to report that Kismet was placed with Susan, a 17-year-old high school student in a motorized wheelchair, on October 12, 2002. Susan needed a best friend who would never tire of picking things up, and that’s Kizzy! Kismet gives Susan increased responsibility for her own life and a sense of pride from her skilled and wonderful dog. Because Susan doesn’t have to ask to have all tasks done for her, she feels freedom and independence that she has never felt before. Kismet can open and close doors, turn lights off and on, put money or a credit card on the counter at a store, pick up anything that Susan drops, help Susan take off her clothes, and even fetch a pair of shoes. Of course, if Susan wants *matching* shoes, they need to be placed together; and Susan can indicate which pair she’d like with a laser pointer.

Kismet still learns every day, and CAP provides constant training and support. Kismet can be instructed to get on the furniture and help get Susan upright if she is slumping or falling to one side. Although she currently needs to be told to perform this task, in time she will learn what a normal posture is for Susan and will be able to detect when an adjustment needs to be made.

Most people think of the physical tasks that an assistance dog can perform. While these are important, there are many benefits that become even more empowering. Nancy says that the emotional and psychological benefits are even greater than the physical. She states, “Responsibility is good for Susan. She practices her vocabulary with Kismet every day. People interact with her more often. She’s learning to be assertive, because she needs to give people permission (or not) to pet Kismet. People are giving her respect, because she has control of a highly-trained animal.” Even the act of grooming her dog is good physical therapy for Susan. Because it feels good (to both Kismet and Susan), she does it more than she would be inclined to do other physical therapy.

Golden Bond Rescue is very proud of Kismet! Patty knew she was a special puppy, and Diana saw her potential as an assistance dog. We thank all of the volunteers at CAP who put their loving training into making Kizzy the *hero* that she is today! We wish Susan and Kismet a long and successful partnership!

Jeanie Vella
Golden Bond Rescue of Oregon
www.goldenbondrescue.com

For more information about Canine