

The official Speaking of Dogs Monthly Newsletter

MARCH 2024

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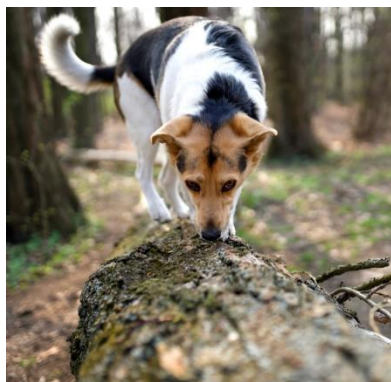
Ask the Trainer

Unleashing the Joy: Exploring the World of Dog Enrichment

Enrichment has become a buzz word in the dog training community but what does it really mean? The idea of enrichment being critical to our pet dogs' health and wellbeing has grown in popularity and is now viewed as an essential responsibility of a dog guardian to understand how best to include it in their dogs' lives.

People think of training programs, dog sports and walks in the neighbourhood as "enrichment". But are those activities truly "enriching" and if not, what activities are? Training, structured neighbourhood walks and dog sports are all fantastic activities that help with the human-canine bond, burn some energy, and teach necessary skills to allow the dog to function in the human world. When I first heard the word "enrichment" I understood it to mean providing stimulation for my dog both mentally and physically. I took my dog Casey training regularly, practiced her skills daily, walked her in the neighbourhood 3 times a day. I thought I was doing well! Yet, my dog was still struggling with minor behaviour issues. She acted frustrated, would bite the leash, or jump at me on our walks, was difficult to control in the home. Her behavior didn't reflect the fulfilling life I thought I had provided for her. What was absent? Enrichment.

Animal enrichment is defined as providing stimulating opportunities that encourage animals to express their species-specific behaviours. Enrichment is practiced in zoos to keep the animals physically and psychologically healthy – their habitats and daily routines redesigned to afford them opportunities to behave as they would in their natural environment. This idea shifted to our own pets. What would their natural state look like and how could we give our dogs the chance to "be dogs"?



What is truly enriching for a dog is seen in the behaviour of free-living dogs. From them, we learn what natural behaviours dogs perform daily without any human intervention. A study conducted in India by Banerjee, A., & Bhadra, A. (2021) entitled "Time-activity budget of urban-adapted free-ranging dogs. *Acta Ethologica*, 25(1), 33–42"* found that more than 50% of a dog's waking hours are spent foraging and moving. The remaining daytime hours are used for social interactions such as play, mating, vocalizing, and posturing. The amount of time dogs spent awake varied from 40% to 70% a day. At least 50% of the time they were foraging and moving, with the remaining time spent in social interactions.

Most of our pet dogs are not moving and foraging 5 to 7 hours a day. The average pet dog spends considerable time waiting inside kennels, crates, houses etc. until their human guardian lets them out.

Then, dogs are put on leashes and walked around neighborhoods at a pace that is slow by dog standards and restricted by the walker's rules. To top it all off, the walk is short, lasting between 30 minutes and an hour. Some dogs might get to play fetch or go to a dog park, go to training, or do a dog sport or occasionally get to run on a trail. These are just a few of the typical human-driven activities that are perceived as enrichment. Although many dogs will enjoy chasing a ball or playing with dog friends at the park, not all dogs do. These activities are controlled by us, the humans, and the dog is not given much choice. This is not true enrichment or, at the very least, should not be the whole enrichment plan.

An enriching activity gives the dog the opportunity to choose behaviours that are natural to their species, with no direction from humans. It is a wonderful way of ensuring all the dog's needs are met and can prevent and/or improve behavior, if done thoughtfully and consistently. This requires a plan, and that plan will look different for each dog.

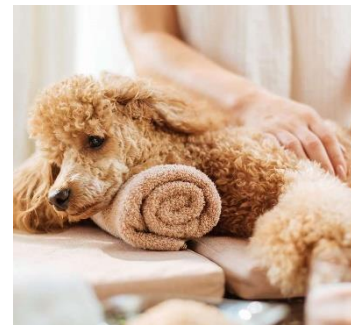
There are endless ideas about how to provide enrichment for your dog. Here are a few examples to help keep dogs happy, healthy and stress free.

1. Natural walks. Nothing fills my heart with joy more than watching a dog run through a field or enjoying the day, sniffing, and exploring without any pressure or interference from humans. If you do not have a large field or recall is an issue, I recommend investing in a 20-foot-long line (a long line is not a retractable leash) and practicing how to manage it, to ensure you and the dog are safe. Go to a large soccer field, a nice trail, or park and let your dog wander, explore, sniff, and walk! I call it the illusion of freedom. Manage the line and walk at the dog's pace when possible. Try not to give your dog commands or tug on the line. This type of walking mimics the migratory way dogs naturally walk and is particularly beneficial to any dog that struggles with reactivity or feels anxious when out on busy streets.

2. Provide opportunities to forage. Play hide and seek with food in your home or yard. Use treat-dispensing balls. Roll treats up in a towel and tie the ends together to give your dog a challenge (only if your dog will not eat the towel!). These games provide your dog opportunities to forage and problem solve while providing a variety of sensory experiences including sound and scent stimulation. An excellent activity I recommend is Animal Centered Education Free Work. This fun and creative framework combines a variety of sensory exercises that can have a profound effect on dog behaviour and resiliency while helping dogs to relax. You set up an open course with various textures, items, puzzles, and obstacles then sprinkle your dog's food throughout the course and let the dog explore and forage!

3. Dogs love to chew and lick! Give your dog a Kong or Tobbl stuffed with delicious food or a lick mat with homemade dog food smeared on it then frozen. Present these to your dog when it is time to wind down after a busy day. It lets your dog work their jaw muscles and get the oral stimulation they need.

4. Give your dog a massage and sing a lullaby! Helping your dog to relax by fulfilling their social need is another type of enrichment. Dogs are social animals and their bond to humans is unique and profound. Both of you get comfortable then start to gently massage your dog's sides and hind legs while singing a soft lullaby. Watch as your dog slowly releases all tension from their body and they start to close their eyes. You will feel a whole new level of endearment towards your dog.



5. Breed specific enrichment ideas. Enrichment is unique to each dog. What a dog likes and dislikes will dictate whether an activity is enriching. Each breed has its own intrinsic behaviours they were selectively bred for. Many tasks, while providing an opportunity to express genetic behavioural traits, also act as a form of cognitive enrichment. Have large herding balls for herding breeds to collect, move and gather. Playing tug with your sport dog can be a blast for them. Find out what your dog's favourite activity is and design an outlet for the instinctual behaviour.

These are just a few examples of enriching activities for your dog. An activity is enriching only if your dog is given the opportunity to participate without external pressure and able to choose to participate or not. Listed below are some excellent resources to help you set up and implement a plan.

Let's circle back to my girl. Once I learned about enrichment, I made some changes to my plan for her. Most of her walks were on long lines on a trail or park or running at a neighbour's field. She was given cardboard boxes to shred as often as I could provide them. She had items she liked to chew or lick, and every night she got a 10-minute gentle massage while I sang her favourite lullaby. What I witnessed was a much calmer dog, able to tolerate more stressors in the environment, and her behaviour issues diminished significantly. We still went to training, walked in our neighbourhood, etc. and she thoroughly enjoyed doing all those activities because it was time with me (and she got lots of treats!) But incorporating more dog-centric, natural activities into her enrichment plan resulted in the most glorious canine-human experience I've ever had.

Click on the links below for additional resources:

[AniEd 100 Days of Enrichment](#)

[Canine Compilation Free Work Enrichment for Dogs](#)

[Canine Enrichment for the Real World: Authors Allie Bender and Emily Strong](#)

[Time-activity budget of urban-adapted free-ranging dogs](#)



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Dogs Looking for Homes

Open your heart and your home to a rescue dog. You'll be glad you did.

For complete information about the adoption process, please visit www.speakingofdogs.com/adoption-process.

For more information on each dog, simply click on their pictures and you'll be taken to our available dogs.

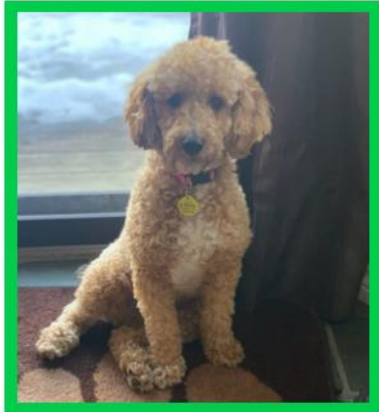
Meet our March Feature Dog: Anna

Anna (aka Hannah) is a lovely girl who is approximately 11 years old and 65 pounds. Sadly, her owner had to move where no dogs were allowed. Times are tough for many people these days, especially when it comes to finding affordable housing. Anna has some health issues that include osteoporosis (back legs, wrists and hips) and hip dysplasia. She has been to our vet and had x-rays done top to bottom. She is now on pain meds and Librela shots once a month to help with pain. She can do stairs and loves to cruise around the foster parent's yard checking out the sights and smells – oh, and barking at people and dogs going by. Anna also has anxiety challenges when left alone. She barks and paces, but does eventually settle (she is doing better now with some meds for anxiety). Unfortunately, she doesn't walk on a leash and panics if offered a walk (even on a very quiet street) due to living in the country her whole life with access to several acres. She is easy to live with and easy to love, quiet in the house, great with other dogs, housetrained and affectionate. Anna has shown no aggression with people, kids or dogs. Not sure about cats, but she is a kind dog overall. She needs an adopter with a house and fenced yard, who has lots of love to share with Anna.



If you are interested in giving Anna a place to call home, please fill out an [application](#) for our consideration.

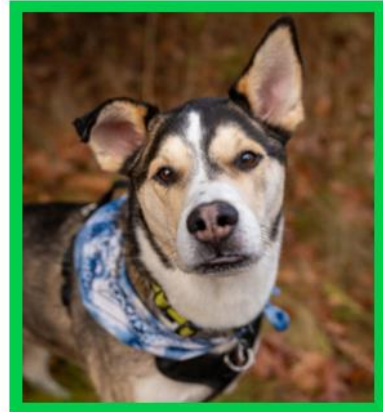
Click [here](#) to visit our adoption application.



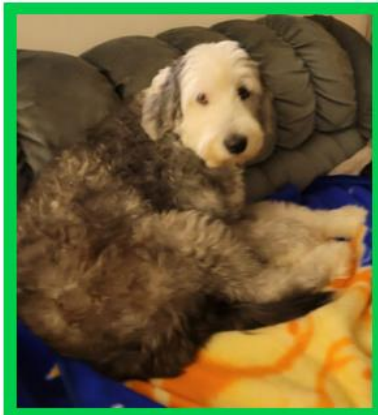
Darren
Poodle (Miniature)
Short Coat
Small, Young, Male



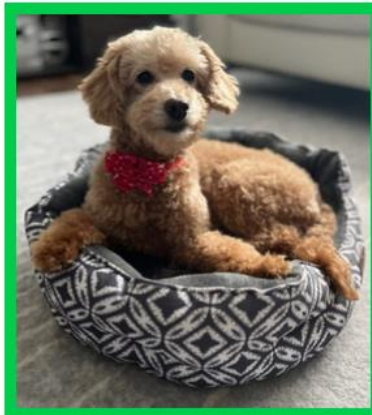
Jessie
Poodle (Miniature)
Short Coat
Small, Adult, Female



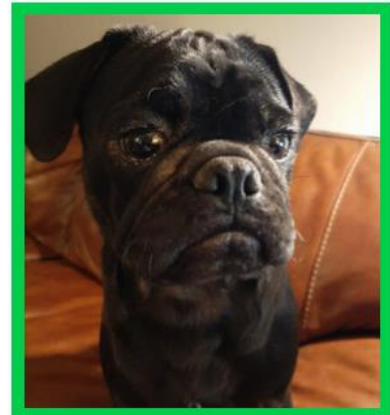
Pogo
Husky / Mixed
Medium Coat
Large, Adult, Male



Sophie
Old English Sheepdog
Medium Coat
Large, Adult, Female



Story
Poodle (Miniature) / Mixed
Short Coat
Small, Adult, Female



Poncho
Pug
Short Coat
Small, Young, Male



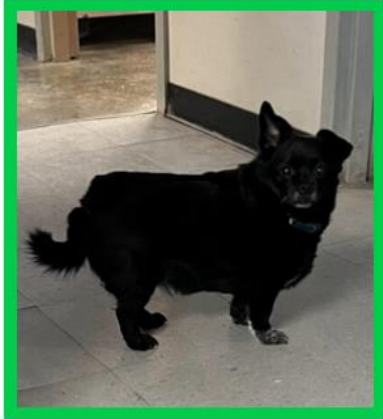
Willie
Shih Tzu / Mixed
Medium Coat
Small, Adult, Male



Reggie
Catahoula Leopard Dog / Labrador Retriever /
Mixed
Short Coat
Large, Adult, Male

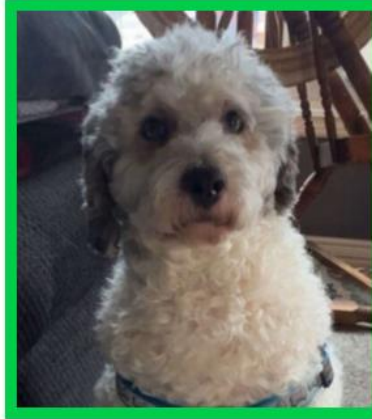


Papaya
Chihuahua / Mixed
Medium Coat
Small, Adult, Female



Fifi

Chihuahua / Pug / Mixed
Medium Coat
Small, Senior, Female



William

Poodle (Miniature) / Old English Sheepdog /
Mixed
Short Coat
Medium, Adult, Male



Tapioca

Shih Tzu
Medium Coat
Small, Adult, Female



Ollie

Poodle (Toy) / Mixed
Short Coat

Adoption Update



Sticker (formerly named Milo) is doing wonderfully! We took puppy class and teenage class which went splendidly. He is bonded to our female dog who basically raised him. They sleep together most of the time and play together all day. He has been enjoying my husband's winter hiking and camping; doing trails in Algonquin, Rouge, Don Valley, Temagami, and more. He's getting tons of exercise and time in the snow (even when there isn't so much down south here). I get to use him as a 100lb heater on my bed which is great for me. I doubt I will ever be cold again. He is so snuggly and loves to spoon. Most nights I fall asleep with my head on his shoulder and my arm thrown across his back.

We couldn't imagine a life without him. He fits us like a missing piece. Some dogs were just meant to be part of your family and he was definitely meant to be part of ours.

Thanks for checking in.

Jen & Sticker

INTRODUCING VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

The SODR newsletter will now periodically include profiles of the wonderful, dedicated individuals who make up the SODR volunteer network.



CHERYL

My name is Cheryl and I have been a volunteer with Speaking of Dogs Rescue since 2016.

I am a veterinary technician who started volunteering as a foster parent. I had to take a break from active fostering at just about the time Lorraine was looking for help with activities related to the Forever in Foster program (where dogs too ill or old to be adopted are cared for by foster parents until they pass and whose medical/care expenses are paid by the rescue). With my vet tech background, I felt I was able to assist with this program and support its dedicated FIF parents.

As the Forever In Foster coordinator, I am happy to provide our foster parents with general support and answer health questions about their dogs. I liaise with our various vet partners to arrange medical appointments and procedures, medication renewals, and grooming services.

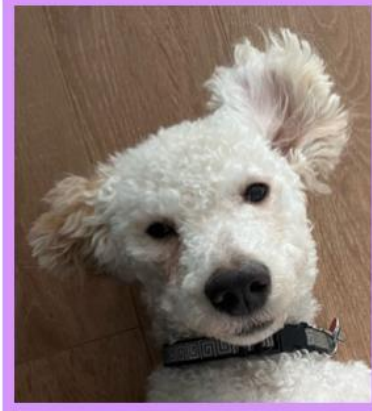
I feel so fortunate to be a part of such a wonderful rescue and being able to offer care to so many special dogs in need.

THANK YOU CHERYL!

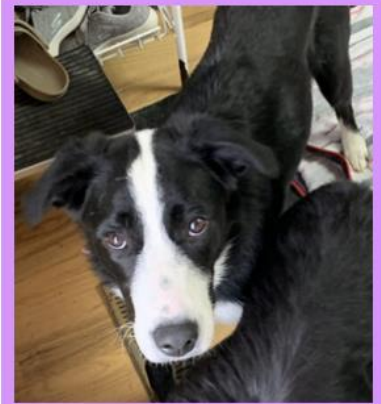
Happy Tails (Recent Adoptions)



Alba



Kenobi



Ruby



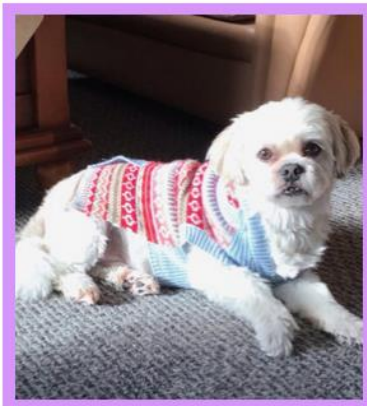
Wally



Rocco



Sugar



Benji



Roxy



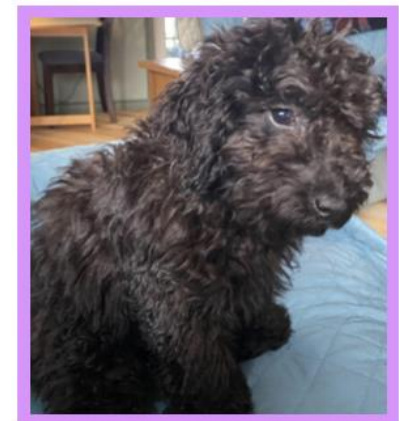
Skye



Charlotte



Sage



Ellie





Woofstock is back!

It will be held at Woodbine Park on **Saturday, June 22nd & Sunday, June 23rd, 2024.**

Before we rent a booth, we need to know if anyone is interested in helping. We need 2 or 3 people for set-up on the Friday (June 21st), 2 people per shift for Saturday and Sunday (which will be divide into 2 or 3 shifts each day), and 3 people for pack up on Sunday.

At the booth, we sell items and we promote our rescue and the dogs we have for adoption.

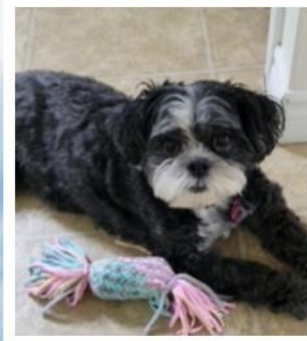
Please contact Kim at speakingofdogs@gmail.com if you are interested helping.

In Memoriam



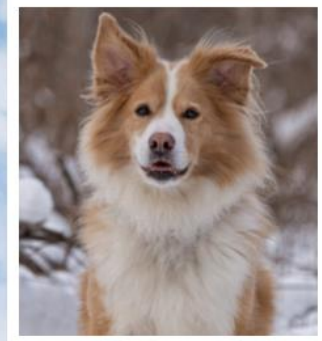
Bear

Adopted February 2014
Loved by Donna and Case



Molly

Adopted May 2021
Loved by Lynne



Nikki

Adopted April 2010
Loved by Kim and Jason



Pete

Adopted May 2015
Loved by Peggy-Lee and family



Zoe

Adopted July 2016
Loved by Angela and family



Lily

Adopted November 2014
Loved by Gerry B

About Speaking of Dogs

Speaking of Dogs Rescue Program is a Canadian registered charity established in the Greater Toronto area (with foster homes across Ontario). Launched in 2001, we are a foster-based, all breed rescue with a focus on senior dogs. We are run solely by volunteers with a mission to help homeless dogs in need by providing shelter or sanctuary, necessary medical care, adoption and education.

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