

The official Speaking of Dogs Monthly Newsletter

JANUARY 2025

2024 Year in Review

Dear Supporters,

A New Year is upon us once again and that calls for an annual update. To get right to the point, it's been yet another year of overwhelming need in the dog rescue community.

With the rising cost of living across the board, people are struggling to make ends meet and care for their family members, which often includes a cherished dog. We see this daily from the increase in owner surrender requests we receive.

Northern Canadian dogs need significant support by way of spay/neuter clinics, education, legislation and veterinary intervention. We partner with several northern dog groups when we can, and follow their incredible crusade on social media and through Flights for Hope.



We are part of a puppy mill coalition that was started some years ago by a woman who has immense patience and stamina when it comes to dealing with the millers. Their greed, lack of care and concern for the dogs is exhausting and exasperating.

Shelters are full, rescues are full, litters of unwanted puppies bombard the internet again as people are either hoping to make a quick buck or could not afford to sterilize their dog.

Despite the current climate for our beloved dogs, we collectively pick ourselves up and soldier on as we have for the past 20+ years.

Last year we helped fund two spay/neuter clinics in Ontario, and purchased surgery packs for a spay/neuter clinic in northern Manitoba. Through our Blackie's Fund and Leg Up programs we were able to sponsor spays and neuters, dentals, boarding, flights, emergency surgeries and behaviour training for both shelter and owned dogs. Intervention and prevention have become two actions we passionately embrace.

Our Forever in Foster (FIF) program helped over 30 dogs last year – a record number. Lovingly cared for and cherished in their final stages of life, our FIF dogs receive unlimited TLC, and receive gold standard healthcare, specialized diets, and regular grooming (all paid for by the rescue). We currently have 19 dogs in the Forever in Foster program.

As a volunteer run charity, we are blessed to have the most remarkable team of people working together on behalf of the welfare of dogs. We are profoundly thankful for their support, expertise, tireless efforts, and time.

In 2024 we assisted almost 200 dogs on their journey to a better life. “Making life better one dog at a time” has become our unofficial motto.

As the earth makes another trip around the sun, we’ll be making some changes and new exciting plans for the rescue! Watch for updates in our monthly newsletter and on social media

Cheers to ringing in 2025,

The Speaking of Dogs Rescue Team

Ask the Trainer

“The Trials and Tribulations of Adolescence”

As a canine behaviour consultant, I frequently encounter clients whose dogs are experiencing issues such as heightened arousal, difficulty paying attention, failure to follow previously mastered cues, and reactivity in dogs that were once friendly. Often, these dogs are between six months and two years old. While the specific diagnosis may vary, the underlying cause is often adolescence.

Adolescence in dogs is a transitional period between puppyhood and adulthood, characterized by significant physical, behavioural, and hormonal changes. This stage typically begins around six months of age and can last until the dog is approximately 18 months to two years old, or even longer, depending on the breed and individual dog. As Maggi Burt, of Tailspin Petworx, noted in her article published in the November 2023 SODR newsletter, during this developmental phase, dogs experience intense emotions with limited impulse control. She highlights that it is unsurprising that this age group constitutes the largest number of dogs surrendered to shelters and rescues.



During adolescence, dogs often exhibit increased independence, test boundaries, and may seem to forget previously learned behaviours. This phase is analogous to the teenage years in humans, where dogs undergo rapid growth and development. The physiological changes occurring in adolescent dogs are substantial. The prefrontal cortex, the brain region responsible for executive function, is still immature and developing. Meanwhile, the emotional center is fully developed, and hormonal changes further complicate the adolescent mind.

In her keynote address at the 2024 Association for Professional Dog Training (APDT) Conference, Dr. Kathy Murphy, DVM and Neuroscientist explained that adolescent dogs differ significantly from puppies and adults in that they:

- Have an increased sensitivity to emotional stimuli
- Exhibit heightened sensitivity to punishment
- Take twice as long to recover from stressors
- Show decreased interest in rewards
- Display unpredictable cognitive and emotional control
- Are more likely to move forward and less likely to retreat

Given these challenges, how can one manage an adolescent dog exhibiting frustrating behaviours and help them navigate this period to emerge as a well-balanced adult?

1. **Focus on enrichment and natural behaviours:** During adolescence, there will be days when your dog appears unresponsive and unable to focus, with once reliable cues seemingly ineffective. On such days, take a break from human-focused activities and, instead, take your dog on a walk in the woods or a field to explore the environment. Bring along a favorite toy or treats and look for opportunities to reinforce behaviours such as returning to you voluntarily or offering attention. Hide treats in your yard and engage in a “hunting” game with your dog. These activities can alleviate pressure and acknowledge that your dog’s cognitive abilities may be temporarily hindered by ongoing biological changes.
2. **Introduce Pattern Games:** Dogs have a remarkable ability to recognize patterns. Introducing pattern games can equip them with skills to cope with their environment. Regular practice of these classically conditioned activities can provide both dogs and their owners with strategies for managing overwhelming situations. Leslie McDevitt’s books, “Control Unleashed”, describes numerous pattern games that can help dogs navigate adolescence.
3. **Teach relaxation protocols and arousal regulation early:** When you get your puppy, teach them to relax on a mat, cot, or platform. Practice arousing your puppy and then calming them down on their designated spot. Engage them with a toy and then break off the game by scattering treats in the grass for them to forage and consume. Early practice of these activities increases the likelihood that these skills will be beneficial during adolescence.
4. **Be aware of your dog’s reaction to environmental stimuli:** Adolescent dogs are highly sensitive to stimuli and punishment. Protect them when they are out in the world, watching for signs of stress or over-arousal. Provide calm guidance and security, managing their environment to minimize negative experiences that could have lasting effects on their psyche.
5. **Be mindful of bravado:** Adolescent dogs are more likely to charge forward when afraid rather than retreat. If your dog shows signs of fear towards another dog or person, it is your responsibility to protect them and those around them by removing them from the situation. Do not be misled by their forward motion if they exhibit signs of fear, such as pinned ears, raised hackles, lip licking, and dilated pupils. These signs indicate a negative reaction that could escalate to barking, growling, snarling, or even biting.
6. **Avoid punishment:** Due to their increased sensitivity to punishment, it is crucial to communicate expectations to adolescent dogs with care. Humane and kind training methods are always advocated, but they are especially important during adolescence. Remain calm and in control of your emotions when working with dogs of this age group. Their resilience to negative experiences is diminished, and the effects of punishment can have lasting and sometimes catastrophic consequences on their behaviour.



These are just a few examples of how we can support our dogs through this challenging developmental stage. While their brains have not lost the knowledge instilled in them as puppies, it is important to recognize that some days will be more challenging for them to focus and participate as desired. On such days, remember Dr. Kathy Murphy's mantra: **patience, not push**. What she is saying is, if you notice your dog is having a challenging day, be empathetic and patient and do not push your dog to comply or perform. Support and care for them. Have fun with them. Try the hard stuff again another day!

Written by
Karen Baxter, CDBC, Dipl.CBST, L-CCC, CPDT-KA, FDM

Certified Behaviour Consultant and Trainer
Member of the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants
Owner of [Unified K9 Behaviour Centre](#)



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



JEN

My name is Jen, and I have been a volunteer with Speaking of Dogs Rescue for approximately 7 years. I help out a lot of with various administrative tasks but mostly I assist with our Social Media accounts on Facebook, Instagram and X (Formerly Twitter). I've also been involved with some home inspections, fundraising and transport, when I have the time.

My husband and I fostered a few dogs from Speaking of Dogs Rescue, and two of our current dogs, Meg and Sabian are, of course, foster fails. I can't imagine our lives without the two of them, and loved the support the rescue gave us during the foster period and even after the adoption was approved.

I love to help out with Speaking of Dogs because they are truly an amazing rescue that goes above and beyond for the dogs in their care and makes sure they have the best re-start to their lives. I am so happy to be a part of this amazing group of volunteers.

I also want to put a quick shout out to our Social Media pages. Please follow us for some great content and stories of dogs looking for homes!

Facebook: Speaking of Dogs

Instagram: @speakingofdogsrescue

X: @speakingofdogs

THANK YOU JEN



Dogs Looking for Homes

Without a doubt, a dog is a real friend. Our dogs come in all shapes and sizes, but they have one thing in common — they all need loving forever 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.

Meet our January Feature Dogs **JESSIE & JUNIE**



Jessie (brown and white) and Junie (black and merle) are two strongly bonded female Pomeranians who came into rescue from a shelter after being picked up as strays. They will need to be adopted together. With no history, it is estimated that Jessie is 8-years-old, and Junie is the younger of the two, but an adult dog. Both are spayed and they each weigh about 11 lbs.

These are sweet-tempered dogs who are more frightened than anything else. They are hand shy and flee sudden hand movements, but have no aggression at all that we have experienced. They are good with the foster mom's dog. They are curious but shy with strangers and have made progress in that area while in foster care. Housetraining is a work in progress and both dogs will require continued support with this.

Junie is curious and likes to explore, but will run like the wind at any sudden sound or movement. She is playful and puppy-like with Jessie. Junie will follow Jessie's lead – if Jessie is allowing someone to pet her, Junie will very slowly come out to be petted, too. Sometimes she stands and enjoys the petting, and at other times she flattens herself against a wall and looks away while being petted. She is dependent on Jessie and will panic when Jessie is picked up, and when separated from Jessie in any way. Junie also gets frantic if you try to pick her up and tries to get away, so time and patience is required.

Jessie is friendly, but wary. Once settled, she started “welcome barking” and wagging her tail when seeing her foster mom. She is still hand shy, but increasingly less so and enjoys being petted. She runs to greet visitors and will usually permit petting, although she also retreats quickly. She still startles easily, but recovers quicker than she used to. Jessie is protective of Junie, but not aggressively so. If you try to pet Junie, Jessie will sometimes insert herself in between. Jessie can be picked up and held, but she is still not overly uncomfortable with it, and remains stiff. She appears to be relieved when put back down, at which point she will come right back for pets.

They have been kept in a limited space when alone and are not crate trained. They gnawed on the baseboards a bit, but didn't pursue it when the baseboards were covered. They have chewed blankets and towels, pulled stuffing out of dog beds and toys, and shredded disposable pee pads. Junie seeks out

shoes and both of them will chew shoes if given an opportunity. Toys and appropriate chewables are offered in place of these, but they will need continued support learning what they can and can't chew.

Neither dog is used to being walked. Jessie will stand frozen when harnessed and leashed, so learning to walk will be a work in progress and time, patience, and a gentle approach are required.

Jessie is good in a carrier going to the vet's, and is easily handled by the vet for an examination and nail trim. Junie is harder to pick up and examine, as she gets frantic, yipping and scratching, but both dogs permit handling of their heads and it is easy to examine their teeth.

They also respond well to a routine. At bedtime, they play a bit together, and then are quiet and sleep through the night without issue.



Jessie and Junie would probably do best in a quiet home without children. They need an experienced guardian who has time to spend with them and understands their unique needs. They are significant flight risks and need a securely-fenced outside space to roam around in.

These two girls have so much potential if given the chance to shine in their new home!

If you think you are the right fit for Jessie and Junie, please fill out an application for our consideration.

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



Zach
Poodle (Miniature)
Short Coat
Small, Adult, Male



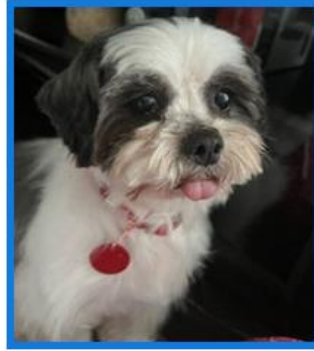
Coco
Corgi / Jindo (Korean) / Mixed
Long Coat
Small, Senior, Female



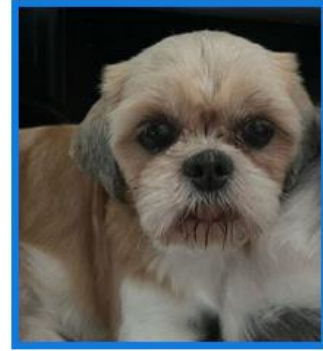
Lydia
Hound / Mixed
Short Coat
Medium, Adult, Female



Fifi
Yorkshire Terrier "Yorkie" / Mixed
Short Coat
Small, Adult, Female



Holly
Shih Tzu
Medium Coat
Small, Adult, Female



Noelle
Shih Tzu
Medium Coat
Small, Adult, Female



Gigi
Poodle (Miniature)
Short Coat
Small, Senior, Female



Ashe a.k.a. Ashley
Shih Tzu
Medium Coat
Small, Adult, Female

Wiggles & Wags

a.k.a. Thank Yous & Shout-Outs

ROCKS for RESCUE BONSPIEL



Thank you so much to the Collingwood Curling Club, Loretta McInnis of Remax, Life by the Water, our volunteers, and players for a great Bonspiel!

We raised over \$6K at this fundraiser!

Happy Tails

a.k.a. Recent Adoptions



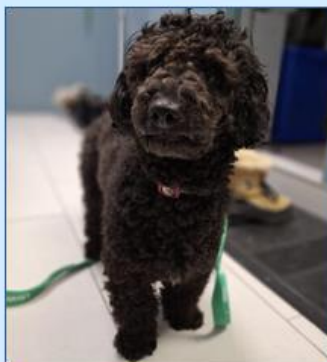
Bailey



Josie



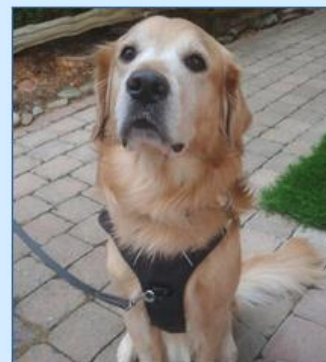
Max



Mya



Niko



Ozzie



Sassy



Adoption Update

Dear Speaking of Dogs Rescue,

Max is an absolute angel from heaven, we were so blessed that he came into our lives. We are both deeply smitten with this boy and he has been just the most amazing dog for our family. We were both broken when we had to say goodbye to Prince, and Max has helped us put some of the pieces back in place.

As far as behavioural issues, other than it being blatantly obvious that he's smarter than us, he hasn't been anything but a perfect dog. He did counter surf when we first adopted him, but we just adjusted our habits and it's not an issue at all anymore.



We always love to talk about Max.

We have adopted another senior dog from our local shelter. His name is Nugget and he is a senior+ shih tzu mix and just so sweet. Unfortunately, he is palliative, but he has a home here for as long as he needs us. Max has been so amazing with Nugget. We weren't surprised since he has always been great with other dogs, but he has been so accepting. This guy is just flawless!

Sincerely,

JEN & TIM HENDY



Toronto Scepters vs Ottawa Charge

We have been gifted 2 PWHL hockey tickets for the game on February 1st that we are auctioning off on our Facebook page.

Location: CNE COCA COLA EXHIBITION arena (easily accessible by GO, TTC), Section 100, row R seats 6 and 7 (Centre ice)

The tickets are worth \$90.00 each.

We've started the bidding at \$150.00 and are running this auction until noon on Wednesday January 8th. Please put your bids in the comment section of this article located on our Facebook page. Bids are accepted in increments of \$5.00.

Tickets will be transferred by email to the successful bidder.

THANK YOU to all our supporters and donors who think of us when it comes to helping us fundraise!



In Memoriam



Tilley

Adopted December 2009
Loved by Shelley Baker & Stu Kellock



Ruger

Adopted December 2009
Loved by Esther Lementi



Mary

Forever in Foster
Loved by Carol & the Melko Family



Devor

Forever in Foster
Loved by Karen, Derek, Thomas, &
Family



Cashew

Forever in Foster
Loved by Chris Storm

amazon wish lists

Want to help our dogs?

Consider making a donation from our Amazon wish list of priority dog supplies.

[Click here to view list](#)

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.

Newsletter Team

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