

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

Group works to rescue golden retrievers (5:45 p.m.)

By Jackie Johnston

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People sometimes react with surprise that there should be a need for a golden retriever rescue organization. They remark, "How could anyone give up such a sweet, wonderful dog?" I agree with this, but recent statistics show that the need is real.

During 2008, 101 goldens were placed by Golden Retriever Rescue of New Mexico. Here in southern New Mexico, I was involved directly with the placement and/or transport of 29 dogs. Five dogs came from Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley, three strays and two owner-surrenders. Six dogs were direct owner releases to GRRNM. Reasons given included not enough time, not enough money, dog too large for the children, allergies, etc. The remaining 18 dogs came from animal control and shelter facilities in El Paso, Midland, Carlsbad and Ruidoso. Many were days or even hours away from being put down.

Rescued goldens have ranged in age from newborn to 15 years. We don't usually have puppies available, but GRRNM placed two litters during 2008. GRRNM does not reject a golden because he or she is too old or has medical problems. A recent rescue, Gracie, seen in the photo above, is 9 years old and was given up in Albuquerque because she tore a ligament in her hind knee and her people could not afford to fix it. They gave her up to the hospital to be euthanized. The hospital called rescue and we went to get her. She was very lame and very overweight. She is now much, much better and has a loving forever home.

The other dog in the photo is Annie, a blind puppy with pretty major neurological impairment. At five weeks of age, she came from a puppy mill in El Paso. Despite the best of medical care and a tremendous outpouring of love by many in the golden community, little Annie was not able to make it. We know that her short life as a little angel touched many of us.

Perhaps our most typical rescued golden is between the ages of nine months to two years. At this point in the dog's life, the owner often cannot deal with the energy level and size. After all, they purchased an eight-pound fuzzy puppy. Some of these dogs end up running loose in the community or are released to a rescue organization. They make wonderful pets once they get the training and attention that they so desperately need.

GRRNM, like most breed rescues, is an all-volunteer non-profit organization. We don't have a shelter; we rely on foster homes and donations for care of the dogs. If you would like to volunteer with golden rescue or want adoption information, contact me, Jackie Johnston, at johnstonranch@totacc.com. Our Web site is www.grrnm.com.

Jackie Johnston is the Southern New Mexico Coordinator for Golden Retriever Rescue of New Mexico.