



The Retriever

Official Newsletter of the Labrador Education and Rescue Network
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L.E.A.R.N. Celebrates First Year!

One year ago, a small handful of Labrador lovers (a few being Central Indiana Lab Rescue volunteers) sat around a table and decided to form a new Lab rescue group that would serve Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin. It was in April of 1999 that the **Labrador Education and Rescue Network (L.E.A.R.N.)** was born. These six people became the Board of Directors for L.E.A.R.N. and started rescuing dogs with money from their own pockets.



New Website Up and Running!

L.E.A.R.N. has a whole new look on the Web! Check us out at www.labadoption.org. We're making changes and additions just about every day, so visit us often!

Since that time, L.E.A.R.N. has expanded its network to include over 25 volunteers. These volunteers are located across northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin, and have worked hard to establish relationships with local shelters, convince veterinarians to provide us with discounted medical services, raise funds, and create promotional materials and the Website.

In the past year, this dedicated network of volunteers has managed to save over 30 dogs and place them in loving homes. Our mission is to assist in the rescue of unwanted Labrador Retrievers by placing them in homes through fostering, adoption and referral. In addition, we strive to provide public education regarding Labrador Retrievers and to promote responsible ownership and the humane treatment of all dogs.

As we begin our second year, we hope to continue to increase our visibility and reach more people, expand our network of volunteers and foster homes, and place even more rescued dogs into loving permanent homes.



One Rescued Life Enriches Many Others

Seldom do people have the opportunity to witness a story as remarkable as Heidi's. We at L.E.A.R.N. feel very grateful and fortunate to have helped ensure this story's happy ending. We hope you enjoy her wonderful story.

Heidi and her mother Elsa came to L.E.A.R.N. in November of 1999. Both were very sweet and beautiful yellow Labradors. Elsa was 12 years old, and Heidi was 8. They had lived their whole lives together with their owner, an elderly widow. The woman's health was rapidly declining, and her dying wish was for L.E.A.R.N. to take in her beloved pets and find them good homes. So L.E.A.R.N. volunteers went to pick up "the girls," and brought them back to a temporary foster home. The elderly widow passed away the very next day.



The girls proved to be challenges for both their foster home and potential adopters. While we hoped to place them together, each dog brought with her traits that proved difficult to match with a perfect family who could adopt both. Heidi suffered from separation anxiety and needed to be in a home where someone was with her most of the time. Elsa, on the other hand, could not go to a home with cats. These issues excluded many of the people who looked seriously at these two beautiful girls. We decided that in order to place Heidi and Elsa permanent homes, we needed to consider other options. That's when the perfect home for Heidi became available.

In March, we heard that Plymouth Place, a retirement home in La Grange Park, IL, was looking for a dog for pet therapy. L.E.A.R.N. volunteers contacted this facility and arranged for a meeting with Heidi. The facility management came to see her, instantly fell in love with her, and decided to adopt her!

Soon after that, we took Heidi to her new “forever home” at Plymouth Place where she received an unbelievable welcome! The entire staff, including the CEO, was waiting for her and greeted her in the parking lot with balloons! Heidi made friends with everyone, and the residents loved her right away. They bought her new water and feed bowls, new collars, a new bed, and all kinds of great toys.

Since that day, we have received many updates from Plymouth Place, telling us how wonderfully Heidi is doing. Heidi will never have to be alone again.



In return, Heidi enriches the lives of all these residents in ways that no human can: she provides unconditional love and acceptance 24 hours a day. She gives residents something to care for and look after. She can spark conversations and social interactions that may never have existed before. She can ease depression and help defeat loneliness and boredom.

This single dog, whose future at one time looked dark and bleak, has become a beautiful bright light in so many lives. There could be no better ending for this story.

NOTE: Elsa, Heidi's mother, is still available for adoption.



Ask Annie

This column is devoted to answering your questions concerning dog care and training. Mary's dog Annie is an expert on most any canine subject, so we've asked for her help with these questions.

Dear Annie: Should I feed my dog once a day, or twice a day?

It is always preferable to feed your dog twice a day. It is much healthier for a dog's digestive system to ingest smaller amounts of food at one time. If they consume too much food at one time, they have an increased likelihood of developing a serious, often fatal condition known as bloat. Dogs who develop bloat must be taken to a veterinarian immediately for emergency medical treatment, or they may die.

To minimize this risk, always feed your dog half its daily amount of food in the morning, and the second half in the evening. Also, keeping your dog calm immediately after eating will also help you avoid this life-threatening condition.

Dear Annie: Can I leave my dog's choke collar on all the time?

ABSOLUTELY NOT! Choke collars and prong collars are training tools and are extremely dangerous if they are left on the dog all the time. So many accidental canine deaths are caused by strangulation from choke chains. Dogs can manage to get caught on any number of things: fences, crates, furniture, sticks, even tall grass or weeds! The **ONLY** time to use a choke chain is when you have your dog on a leash with you.



ChicagoLand Family Pet Show is a Huge Success

Last month, L.E.A.R.N. had a booth at the annual Chicagoland Family Pet Show held on March 17-19 at the Arlington International Racetrack in Arlington Heights, IL. It was the first time L.E.A.R.N. had been represented at a show of this magnitude. Our booth was wildly successful. Hundreds of people visited with us to pet our rescued dogs and inquire about what our group does. Our booth was actually TOO SMALL! We've received quite a few volunteer and adoption applications as a result of this show. We can't wait to do this again at next year's show.



Congratulations and a huge "Thank you!" to all the volunteers who worked at the show!



L.E.A.R.N. Volunteer Opportunities

As with any non-profit organization, our need for volunteers is great. There are so many dogs that need to be rescued; it's foolish for us to think we can save them all. We can save some, however, but not without your help. We rely completely on "volunteer power" and donated resources.

If you or anyone you know can assist us with any of the following, please contact us at (847) 289-7387 or via e-mail at learndogs@yahoo.com.



- **Foster Homes** – This is our most urgent need. Fostering a rescued dog in your home involves treating it as if it were your own until a permanent home is found. This can take as little as one week or as long as two months. Very simply, fostering is the essence of what we're all about. The more foster homes we have in our network, the more dogs we can save.
- **Dog Identification** – This involves looking at dogs in shelters, etc. in your area and identifying labs in need of rescue.
- **Home Visits** – This involves going to a potential adopters home, interviewing the adopter, and determining the expectations, requirements, etc., the potential adopter has for a dog. You are responsible for determining if this potential adopter would make a good loving permanent home for a L.E.A.R.N. dog.
- **Fundraising** – This involves spearheading our fund raising efforts.
- **Public Relations** – This involves coordinating our efforts to increase our visibility through the media and at public events, such as dog shows and pet stores.
- **Dog Transportation** – Moving dogs from rescue situations to foster homes, or from foster homes to permanent homes.



Calendar of Upcoming Events

April 29 – Appearance at Petco in Palatine, IL

April 30 – Appearance at Petco in Round Lake Beach, IL

May 13 – Appearance at Animart in Madison, WI

June 17 – Booth at Winnebago Labrador Retriever Club Specialty in Beloit, WI

July 15 & 16 – Booth at Kishwaukee Kennel Club Show, Boone County Fairgrounds in Belvidere, IL

August 19 & 20 – 2nd Annual L.E.A.R.N. Rummage Sale in Grayslake, IL (more information to follow)



Wish List

In addition to monetary gifts, we are currently in desperate need of the following new or used items.

- Large Wire Crates
- Large Vari-Kennels
- Blankets and comforters
- Collars
- Training Collars (Choke Chains)
- Leashes

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