

DOG TALK

With
Nancy Truax



WRITTEN BY: **NANCY TRUAX**

One of the things that I love most about being an Oregon Dog Rescue (ODR) volunteer is watching pooches leave to go home with their new families. It is even more gratifying when the dog being adopted is a special needs pet. While Oregon Dog Rescue has placed over 1700 dogs in loving homes since its inception, there are a few unusual adoptions that stand out in my mind. From the nine-year-old Pomeranian with one eye, to the 10 and 12 year old pair of bonded senior dogs who were placed together, I know that there are human angels who are willing to share their homes with these harder-to-place pooches.

My favorite special needs adoption was that of Lily, a beautiful yellow Labrador Retriever, by a wonderful family with two extraordinary young girls. While Olivia (now almost 10 years old) always liked dogs, she was somewhat fearful of them. Her older sister, Riley (now 12 ½ years old), had a severe phobia of dogs. This was the result of being pounced on by an overly-eager dog on a school playground when she was a baby. Riley found that her unyielding fear limited her social opportunities. She could not visit friends or relatives if a dog was present. Determined to conquer her fear, Riley began working with a therapist and gradually, over the period of a year,

worked through her dread of dogs.

When she had gotten past her phobia, she and her sister Olivia were eager to get a dog. Their parents, Matt and Stacy Henne, were aware of the commitment necessary to add a dog to their family. They explained to Riley and Olivia that the subject was something that the family could discuss, and perhaps follow through on in one year.

Being the incredible girls that they are, Riley and Olivia wanted to help dogs in some way, even though they were not able to have one of their own yet. So, the girls set up a lemonade and fudge stand and donated the proceeds to Oregon Humane Society.



After a year, Matt and Stacy agreed to add a dog to the family. Riley and Olivia were pretty specific about their criteria for selecting a dog. First of all, it would have to be a rescue dog. Secondly, it would have to have some sort of disability. During the summer of 2011, the family began looking on petfinder.com, a clearinghouse for shelters throughout the country. On the website, they found Lily (formerly Hoppy), a seven-month-old Lab puppy

that had been born with a deformed leg and had to have it removed. Lily was in the care of Oregon Dog Rescue, so they arranged to meet her. It was love at first sight. Lily joined the Henne family one month after her surgery.



In May, I invited the Hennes to come to the Oregon Dog Rescue facility with Lily and update me on the months since Lily had become a part of their family. Riley and Olivia explained that kids ask lots of questions about Lily and her missing limb. Adults are less likely to do so. If people stare at Lily, they will offer an explanation of her disability. Riley and Olivia feel that kids are more accepting of Lily, and the friends who have spent time with Lily don't even seem to notice her missing leg anymore. The Hennes adore her and just think of her as their dog, as well as a member of the family. Riley and Olivia feel that Lily has taught them, as well as their friends, to accept people and animals as they are without worrying about appearances or disabilities.

After we toured the new building, we moved to Brown's Ferry Park in Tualatin to take some photos. While there, Lily noticed a Chesapeake Bay Retriever (named Curly Q) repeatedly catching a Frisbee being thrown by his owner. Lily wanted to get in on the action. She caught up with Q, who relinquished the Frisbee. Q was

certainly a gentleman. There were some great

chases and a couple of tug-of-war games, with Lily keeping up stride-for stride. I was amazed at how little Lily's disability affected her, and thrilled to see how much fun she was having with Q.

According to the girls, there is only one accommodation that has to be made due to Lily's disability. When Lily holds her ears in a certain position, the Hennes know that Lily has an itch on her left side that she would like to have scratched. They are more than happy to help. The bond that Lily has with this family is remarkable. When I mentioned to them how thrilled I was that Lily found such a wonderful home, they were all quick to point out that Lily has given as much to them as they have to her.



Oregon Dog Rescue Grand Opening Celebration!

To learn more about Oregon Dog Rescue, please come to our Grand Opening Celebration on June 16th from noon – 5:00 p.m. Our address is 6700 Nyberg Street, Tualatin. We plan to give tours, have food available for our guests, and have raffles and prizes. Zelda, the Bulldog featured in Zelda Wisdom books and calendars, will be making an appearance from 1:00 – 3:00, with her owner Carol Gardner. Carol and Zelda are longtime supporters of ODR. Oregon Dog Rescue has been placing dogs in permanent homes for almost five years, but we are now celebrating the opening of our very own facility. Our pooches spend the days in playrooms, where they can interact with each other and volunteers. We encourage pet lovers to come see our facility, sign up to volunteer, and to support our efforts to find homes for dogs who need them.