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Hello and welcome to Virginia German Shepherd Rescue. If you are reading this you are also probably a German Shepherd enthusiast of some sort. This is our first newsletter and we are quite excited about it. We would be delighted to hear any feedback and would love input toward future newsletters.

A bit about our group: Virginia German Shepherd Rescue was formed in April of 2001. Many of our volunteers bring invaluable experience through their associations with other rescue organizations. We have a diverse, talented group of first-class volunteers and I know that together we will be able to accomplish many great things and make life better for many unwanted, unloved or homeless German Shepherds in Virginia.

When our group started, our efforts were concentrated in the Northern Virginia/DC Metro area. As the word grew, we quickly expanded our network of volunteers to include branches in the Central Shenandoah and Virginia Beach areas.

In addition to helping homeless GSDs find their new families, we also try to help folks who already have a German Shepherd if they have questions or problems with training issues, or need recommendations for a veterinarian, good kennel or training classes.

After someone adopts a dog from our organization, we are available to help with any problems or questions that arise as a result of the addition of their new family member. A big part of what we try to do is match the proper dog with the right family by taking the dog's age, personality and temperament into consideration prior to making a placement.

What can you do to help us further our noble cause? Help us get the word out—if your neighbors, coworkers, relatives or friends are thinking about adding a German Shepherd to their family, please let them know that we are only too willing to help! Conversely, if they have a GSD that needs to find a new home, please let us know and we will do our utmost to help.

Thanks very much for your interest in our group. We are open to hearing any suggestions, comments, ideas, compliments and even criticisms. We want to do the best job we possibly can and we realize that there is always room for improvement. So please don't be shy—speak up.



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Newsletter contributions are always welcome. Please send your articles and photos to contact@shepherdrescue.org

***Welcome to the first edition of the newsletter-without-a-name. Can you think of an appropriate name for it? Please submit your ideas to contact@shepherdrescue.org. The winner of the chosen name gets a free VGSR t-shirt!!**

And now, a plea from our President...

Right now our biggest need is foster homes. The number of dogs we can help increases as the number of foster homes we have available increases. If you know anyone you think would provide a safe and loving environment for a dog in need, please send them our way. Words are inadequate to describe how good it feels when you see the formerly unwanted, untrained, neglected GSD that you fostered transform into a healthy, happy well-behaved dog and become a treasured new member of someone's family. The foster dogs NEVER forget their foster family, probably because those were the first folks who provided the dogs any kindness or love. John and I have been fortunate to be the foster home for numerous dogs over the years and the rewards have been immeasurable. My former foster pooches still go absolutely crazy when they see me, even if it has been years since they lived with me. If you have ever thought about fostering, I highly recommend that you give it a try. And don't think that all foster dogs are problem dogs. Abygail Anka, who bunked with me for a couple of weeks, arrived completely housetrained and even off-leash obedience trained to respond to hand signals. She was amazing. You should have seen us showing off at the dog park in Reston. If you would like some additional information about fostering and what is involved, please don't hesitate to call our hotline at 703-435-2840. Try it – you'll like it! Thanks very much.

Lea

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MEET THE OFFICERS

Lea Spickler – President

Bobbie Cascio – Vice President

Sue Garrison – Secretary

Mary Anne Drakulic – Treasurer

Matt Browning, DVM – Board Member at Large

Now a bit about our officers: My name is *Lea Spickler* and I am owned by four GSDs, Josey, Trooper, Deja Vu and Smoochy. Also residing at the House 'O' Dogs are John, my ever-so-patient partner for the past 22 years, and two cats. Our cat PeeWee, the world's most famous dog-testing cat, sadly passed away a few months ago. I have been in love with German Shepherds since the age of 10. My neighbors had a female GSD named Dusty and I loved her like she was my own. As soon as we purchased our first house in 1991, John and I left the lawyer's office after closing in separate cars; he went to move furniture and I went to pick out a GSD. And the GSD I picked that day was my beloved Josey—and I could not have found a better dog if I'd searched the world over. She is now 12 and starting to slow down a bit, but she is still a truly wondrous creature. If she weren't so wonderful, I wonder if I would be involved in breed rescue today. So, thanks Jo! (Even though I do resent the fact that she loves John the best!)

Bobbie Cascio, our VP, lives with her two German Shepherd Rescue boys, Dalton—3 ½, and Monroe—2. The two of them have been wonderful foster brothers to dozens of scared, sick and injured German Shepherds like Travis. Dalton and Monroe teach the fosters the ropes and give them hope in finding their own loving, permanent homes. Bobbie, with her partner Tom, spends time working with shelters looking to VGSR for help. They evaluate dogs based on temperament and health and arrange transport their new foster homes. Bobbie knows that a sick, scared or injured GSD in an animal shelter is resilient and, with a little TLC from a foster family, will be tomorrow's beloved companion for the right person.

Sue Garrison, our secretary, shares her home with her dogs Lexus and Beemer (psycho-dog), her hubby, Ed and her daughter, Carolena, who is the

human version of PeeWee the test cat. Carolena checks out the dogs to see if they like to be cuddled by kids. Poor Sue made the mistake of running into me at a PetsMart two years ago at Christmas time while she was out shopping for a dog bed for her Cocker Spaniel, Bentley. Before she knew what hit her, she was fostering a huge male GSD over the Christmas holidays. After that, Sue and her family shared their home with a number of GSDs before they ended up adopting Lexus. Now Sue is an active foster home for VSGR and spends many hours checking references on adoption applications and doing home visits.

Mary Anne Drakulic, our treasurer (who can make a penny squeal!), has been my partner in GSD rescue for several years and has also become my dear friend in the process. Although we are as different as night and day, we have lots of fun and laughs while doing our good work for the dogs. She is diligent and doesn't stop till she gets the job done. She is owned by the beautiful black GSD duo of Star and Lobo. And let's not forget her husband, David, the ever-vigilant dog walker who takes care of things at home while Mary Anne is running around all over town working for the rescue.

Matt Browning, DVM is our esteemed Board Member at Large. He is on the staff at Clocktower Animal Hospital in Herdon, VA and has probably neutered/spayed more GSDs than any other vet in the state. Matt was kind enough to volunteer to be on our board when we told him that we were forming a rescue here in Virginia. Besides being a terrific vet, he is also a terrific human being and you will never find a more compassionate man. This rescue owes him a huge debt of gratitude. I depend on Matt for his consistent guidance and good advice. Thanks to "Doc B" our rescue dogs get top-notch vet treatment.

YOUR DOG'S HEALTH

Warm-Weather Tips from Dr. Browning

It's summer, which means it is flea, tick and heartworm prevention time. I thought I would review some of the preventatives out there. Heartworm preventative should be given year around. Flea and tick preventatives can be given during spring, summer, and fall.

Heartworm preventatives

Interceptor—Pill that is given monthly to prevent heartworm disease. It also will remove mild hookworm, roundworm and whipworm infections.

Sentinel—Has the same active ingredient as Interceptor above, but also adds in flea control-see below.

Heartguard—Pill that is given monthly to prevent heartworm disease. There is also **Heartguard Plus**, which removes mild hookworm and round worm infections, as well as preventing heartworm disease.

Proheart 6—This is an injection that is given every 6 months to prevent

heartworm disease. It will control hookworm infections as well.

Revolution—Heartworm preventative that is applied topically one time a month. Also has flea and tick control benefits-see below. Revolution does not have an intestinal parasite control label for the dog.

Flea and tick control

Program—A pill that is given monthly. It works by sterilizing the female flea. This product is used as a preventative, not to remove active infestations.

Sentinel—Combines Interceptor and Program into one monthly pill.

Frontline—Flea and tick control that is applied topically one time a month. **Frontline Plus** is also available. It contains an additional product that affects the flea egg.

Advantage—Topically applied monthly product for fleas. The company that makes Advantage has come out with **Advantixx**. This is a brand

new topically applied product that controls fleas, ticks and mosquitoes. The mosquito control is quite interesting given the overall concern with West Nile Virus. I have yet to dispense any of this product.

Revolution—As above, plus it is quite effective against fleas. It is labeled for ticks, but only for one type of tick. It is not labeled for the tick that causes Lyme disease.

I hope this overview of animal hospital dispensed parasite products is helpful. Please avoid using any of the products that you can purchase from pet stores and grocery stores. These products contain ingredients that have a much greater incidence of toxicity and death. The products described above, are absolutely more expensive. However, they are much more safe and effective.

I hope everyone has a good year!

Dr. B

Travis's Story

One day I was lost, hungry, thirsty and scared. Someone picked me up and took me to a building called an ANIMAL SHELTER.

They fed me and gave me water but it was a scary Bad Place. All the dogs barked and cried all day and all night. No one came to visit me. Exactly, on my fifth day, Wednesday, a Nice man walked by my cage late in the day, looking for another dog. He looked surprised to see me and ran to get the Busy lady. "Why didn't you tell me about this one?" But the Busy lady didn't know why. The Nice man and Busy lady took me out of my cage. I tried to show them what a good, brave boy I was, but I was tired and weak. The Busy lady said I was scheduled to be euthanized that very afternoon.

The Nice man convinced her not to do that. Then the Nice man promised me he would be back on Friday to get me.

As promised, the Nice man came back Friday to get me. He had to lift me into the truck marked VGSR because I was too weak to jump. He took me straight to a place called: ANIMAL HOSPITAL. A Pretty lady in a white lab coat declared me healthy and said I was a GOOD BOY. Then the Nice man took me to a place called: RAGS to RICHES. There a man named John washed the filth out of my matted fur and declared me a GOOD BOY. I was starting to believe it. No one seemed to care that they could see all my bones.

Then the Nice man took me home to a lady and two dogs that looked just like me, except I couldn't see their bones.



Dalton, said he was at the Bad Place a long time ago and a Nice lady from MAGSR came for him. (I still don't know what this GSR stuff means, yet.) MAGSR held him for a long time, until the the Nice people came to get him. Then I met a funny, young dog, named

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Virginia German Shepherd Rescue can *always* put the following items to good use:

money	dog food
dog treats	rawhide bones
crates	postage stamps
collars and leashes	heartworm preventative
towels	moving pads/quilted blankets
dog toys	tennis balls

We try to send each adopted pooch to its new home with a new collar and a chewie or two. We call it “packing their suitcase.” If a dog comes to the rescue with supplies such as a dog bed, crate, bowls, toys, etc., we always make sure that these items convey to the new family so that the dog has some familiar items in its new home. Sadly though, most of the pooches come from the shelter and they do not even have a collar to call their own. So if you see a good sale on collars, toys or rawhides at the local pet store, please think about buying a couple of extra ones to donate to our good cause. Also, if you enjoy yard sales as much as we do, they are a great place to pick up bargains for dog stuff. We have gotten quite a few FREE crates after we tell the folks about the rescue dogs. What we usually do is leave a business card and advise them that if the crate doesn’t get sold, we would be delighted to come back and pick it up later that day. Most people just give us the crate right on the spot.

Speaking of yard sales..... We plan to hold our next fundraising yard sale sometime this fall. If you have items that you would like to donate, and you want them out of your house before next spring, please let us know - we’ll find a place to stash it. Our previous yard sales have been very successful and have earned more than \$1,000.00 each for the rescue. People often end up paying more than we’re asking for an item when they hear it is for the rescue. So hang on to those unwanted holiday presents – someone might actually want to buy that hideous vase that your great Aunt Agnes inflicted on you.

CENTRAL SHENANDOAH REGION UPDATE

Just after Thanksgiving, **Sheree Kiser** and I were feeling pretty smug. As the VGSR representatives from this area we were on a roll! We had just completed a great adoption with **Joyce Rothfon** adding Ava to her family. Both Joyce and Ava were ecstatic with each other and it was obviously a match made in heaven. The **Iannottas** had fallen in love at first sight with King and another superb adoption was under our belt. We pulled Beau, a gorgeous purebred with a hard beginning in life, from the SPCA and placed him in a wonderful foster home with **Anne Avery**. We then rescued Ryle from a shed with no windows or ventilation and placed him with our newest VGSR volunteer, **Amy Hughes**. Well, next thing you know, Anne adopted Beau and Amy adopted Ryle. Of course we were very happy for all the humans and dogs involved, but Sheree and I then realized, we were out of foster homes! So, when Beau’s brother Bentley was given up by his owners, Sheree was kind enough to open her home. Sheree’s two GSDs Noel and Reise were happy though that Bentley got adopted quickly by **Brent, Barbara and Morgan Taylor**.

Around the hectic holiday time, we also pulled Nakita and her pups from the SPCA and placed them with our very own angel on earth, **Beverly Faulkenberry**. Beverly and her husband Bill definitely deserve every award in the book for all

(continued on page 6)

Travis’s Story-continued

Monroe, and he said he was at the Bad Place very recently. And did I want to wrestle? But I was too weak. So we ate and drank and went to bed in a safe, soft place. I couldn’t sleep yet, but I knew things were looking better.

The next day, Saturday, a pretty dog named Jazzy-Jasmine came to spend the night. She said she was from the Bad Place, too. And did I want to wrestle? But I was too weak. Jazzy-Jasmine said Sunday was Scarf Day and stop worrying. (“What on earth was Scarf Day?” I worried.)

On Scarf Day, the Nice man lifted me in the truck once more and we rode to the place called PETSMAST. There were other dogs there that looked like me, except you couldn’t see their bones. They, too, said they came from the Bad Place, and we were all there to find a GOOD HOME. (But I didn’t know what GOOD HOME means.) We got to wear scarves and lots of people petted us and asked questions. Kids touched us and smiled. Lots of people were wearing shirts that said VGSR. (What is this GSR stuff?)

People pointed at me and stared. They wanted to know what happened to me and why they could see all my bones? “It wasn’t my fault,” I wanted to tell them, and tried to show them I was a really brave GOOD BOY. Still I wanted to stay close to the Nice man, because there were so many people. It was very scary sometimes. Eventually I got tired and fell asleep, because I was so weak. The Nice man lifted me in the truck, again, when it was time to leave.

Lots of dogs found a GOOD HOME that day: Jazzy-Jasmine, Dashing Duke, Mighty Mickey, Little Philly, Big Polar and Silly Cecelia. But not me. Jazzy-Jasmine said “Don’t worry, Travis. Next week there will be another Scarf Day. Until then, you have a GOOD HOME.”

Now I know what GSR is all about!!!

Thanks to all of you,
Travis

THANK YOU!

We gratefully acknowledge the following donations—

Karen & Marty Baker
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Virginia German Shepherd Rescue, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization. This means that any donations made to the group are tax deductible. The biggest expense a rescue group has is vet bills. A few dogs come into the rescue fully vetted, but a vast majority of them need complete vet work before they go to their forever family. This includes DHLPP and rabies vaccines, a heartworm test and a spay/neuter. Often we get dogs that have been badly neglected and need additional vet care to make them well. There are kind and caring vets that will give rescue organizations discounts on these services but the costs are still high. Frequently, the adoption fee does not cover the cost of getting the dog ready to go to its forever home. There are also other costs involved in keeping the rescue running. These include the purchase of collars and leashes (shelter dogs usually come into the rescue without even a collar). Sometimes there are fees involved in getting a dog from a shelter; sometimes we need to board a dog until a foster home becomes available. In addition, there are advertising fees and monthly phone charges. You can help by donating to our group and supporting our fundraising efforts. The more working capital we have the more wonderful dogs we can save.

Mary Anne Drakulic
 Treasurer

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“So You Want a New Dog Bed? Why Not Foster a Shepherd Instead!”

As many of you already know, I actually got involved with this group by shopping at Christmas time in a pet store for a new bed for my cocker spaniel. The meeting was well, let's see now...fate? a miracle? dumb luck? God's sense of humor? Well, whatever it was... here is the outcome.

I went with my family for a dog bed and met a lady with a beautiful German shepherd. She kept saying “he’s available” and telling us all the neat things he could do. The droopy eyes (dog) and sad face (both dog and lady) kept staring at us, as she told us how he was supposed to have been put down that very same day, but was saved and now needed a place to stay. Have you figured out who the lady was yet? You’ve got it — none other than Lea Spickler! Needless to say, we found room at “our inn” for Sundance almost 4 years ago during the holidays and as they say...the rest is history. Have we ever regretted it — no way! We have gotten and continue to get back 10-fold of what we have given to the foster dogs we have had. Do I recommend fostering? You bet — 110%! Many people ask how we can give up the fosters, and I always say that after having done foster care for children, and now dogs, there’s no comparison. With dogs, you get to be a part of where and to whom the dog goes. We don’t take in aggressive dogs and I’ve never met one yet who could backtalk. Stealing is another story,

however, because they can definitely steal your heart in about a half-minute. But the best part of fostering is taking the dog to its new owner and watching the joy on the human faces (old and young alike), as well as the smile on the dog’s face as you deliver to its forever family. We call this having “warm fuzzies” at my house!

While fostering is definitely not for everyone, and you do *not* have to foster to be a volunteer for our group, I highly recommend fostering for anyone who has a little extra space and a little extra love to share. What do you get in return? Only the most extra special kisses and hugs that you’d ever want to get. If you have any concerns or questions concerning fostering, feel free to contact me. Oh, and did I mention the second best part? You get to hang around with some of the dearest, kind, gentle, loving, caring and tender-hearted people you’ll ever have the pleasure of knowing. So you see, it’s a win/win situation! And, yeah, they call me sentimental — the sappy one of the bunch!

Sue Garrison

Shenandoah Update-continued

their care and hard work with Nakita and her puppies. Beverly had holiday company to contend with, several days with no electricity, and numerous other “bumps in the road,” but she handled everything beautifully and flawlessly. The best news of all was Nakita was adopted by VGSR’s very own volunteer Bob Chinery.

A huge round of applause must go to **Amy Hughes**. She works for Adelphia Cable and was solely responsible for every aspect of the VGSR Public

Service Announcement that is being shown in this area. We have received nothing but great feedback and we’re really getting our name out in the public. It’s been most exciting and we really appreciate all her hard work.

Lastly, from all of us down in Staunton (remember, it’s pronounced Stan-Ton!) thanks must go to Lea, Bobbie, Sue, and Mary Anne. They help us more than they’ll ever know.

Mary Penn

How Animals Learn

Changing a pet’s undesirable behaviors to acceptable ones requires that you understand how a pet learns. Pets learn on their own all the time—a dog who jumps on the counter and finds there the leftovers from lunch, learns that jumping on the counter has a big payoff. The motivation for this learning comes from the pet himself. When you try to teach your pet new behaviors, the motivation comes from you. The behaviors that you want are not necessarily those that your pet wants. Understanding the process of learning will make you more effective at teaching the behaviors you find desirable.

Learning is shaped by the consequences of actions. Reinforcement, sometimes called reward, increases the probability that a given behavior will be repeated. It is a promise that something good will follow the behavior. Consistent reinforcement can increase both the frequency and the intensity of the repetition. Positive reinforcement is the addition of something pleasant immediately after a behavior; for example, a dog sits, and immediately receives a food treat. Negative reinforcement is the removal of something unpleasant immediately after the behavior; for example, a rider squeezes her legs against a horse’s side, the horse begins walking, and the squeezing stops. Punishment decreases the probability that a behavior will be repeated. It is a threat that something bad will follow the behavior. Positive punishment is the addition of something unpleasant after a behavior; for example, a dog barks, and a citronella collar sprays his face. Negative punishment is the removal of something pleasant after a behavior; for example, a dog jumps up and a person turns away and ignores him.

Punishment is generally a less effective learning aid than reinforcement,

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How Animals Learn-continued

particularly with pets who have behavior problems. The biggest drawback to punishment is that it aims at stopping an undesirable behavior, rather than teaching and encouraging a desirable one. "No!" may stop your pet from doing something he should not, but it does not provide any guidance about what the pet should do. Punishment tends to increase fear and anxiety, both of which interfere with the ability to learn, and increase the risk that the pet will react with aggression.

Reinforcement is used to distinguish desirable behaviors from unacceptable ones. It is both a marker for the behaviors you want and a motivator for your pet to repeat them. Reinforcement is most effective when you chose rewards from your pet's point of view, using those he seems to value. A more valued reward will have a greater impact, so high quality rewards should be used to reinforce very desirable behaviors. Timing is essential: you need to reinforce the behavior immediately, or even as it is occurring. For this reason, an intangible reinforcer, like praise, is always coupled with a tangible reward, like food or a toy. Any time you introduce a new behavior, you need to use both for each repetition until the pet produces that behavior reliably whenever you request it. Even after the behavior seems solid, you are wise to use a tangible reward occasionally, so that the pet anticipates that any repetition may result in a reward. The intangible reinforcer, like praise, should always be used, no matter how well the behavior has been learned.

We ask you to reinforce desirable behaviors and ignore undesirable ones, rather than correct them. Correction, which is another term for positive punishment, is counterproductive in behavior modification, which is essentially learning. If a dog sits when requested, and receives a treat, the word "sit" becomes a promise that something good will follow the behavior it requests. If a dog does not sit when requested, and receives a leash jerk, the word "sit" becomes a threat that something bad will follow the lack of the behavior it requests. The signal that the dogs acts on, "sit," is now both promise and threat. The anxiety provoked by the anticipation that the word "sit" can lead to two differ-

ent results, can make training an average dog difficult. For a dog with a behavior problem, a dual approach using both reinforcement and punishment may make behavior modification impossible, and even harm his relationship with you.

Learning new and desirable behaviors can be difficult for pets with behavior problems. This is because fear and anxiety cause the pets to view ordinary situations as emergencies. A pet with separation anxiety may panic when you leave, and be unable to calm himself. A pet with fear of social situations may try to flee or attack, and be unable to pay attention to you when unfamiliar people or animals approach. This is why we begin with basic behavior modification exercises that you do with the pet in a quiet, safe place. The pet cannot learn new behaviors in difficult situations until he can pay attention to you in nonthreatening settings. Remember that a stimulus that provokes a reaction from your pet will not desensitize him to something upsetting. Placing him repeatedly in situations that provoke a reaction will actually sensitize him to such situations and make the problem worse in spite of your time and effort. If your pet reacts to a stimulus and cannot pay attention to you, he should be removed from that setting promptly. You will maximize the results of your efforts if you are content with small steps and slow progress. Your pet will have good days and bad days, and you can become more effective by observing what contributes to a good day or a bad one. A mistake is an opportunity for you to learn more about the specifics of your pet's problem, and to develop management strategies. The most reasonable approach is not to expect perfection, but to expect and work toward a better quality of life for pets and the people who care for them.

Marsha Reich, DVM

About the author: Dr. Reich is Board Certified in Behavioral Medicine and is in private practice serving the DC metro area. She can be reached at (301) 384-3900. This article is copyrighted by the author, reprinted here with permission.

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Virginia German Shepherd Rescue, Inc.
P.O. Box 126
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Attention VGSR Alumni and Supporters

Look inside for your invitation to our Second Annual Alumni Reunion Picnic...please join us!