



TALES OF GOLD

TRAINING TOUCHDOWN



This football season has been one for the record books with new fans, exciting games and future hall of fame coaches changing teams, with all the gridiron action culminating this month in the Super Bowl. How does this relate to a dog rescue, you ask? Well, just like football players, dogs need to be taught important skills. Instead of learning how to kick a field goal, however, dogs need to be properly trained on appropriate behavior. Tom Brady didn't just pick up a football and throw a perfect spiral; he learned how and then practiced. The same holds true for your dog. He needs you to teach him how to walk on a leash or come when called.

When Becky and Jeremy adopted Josh Allen – yes, named after the Buffalo Bills star quarterback – it was love at first sight. “He’s just the happiest boy,” Becky says. “He’s so energetic and excited to meet new people.” When Josh arrived at his foster home it was clear he had no



prior training. His foster family and a GRRMF professional trainer began the task of helping Josh learn acceptable behaviors and boundaries. TOUCHDOWN – Josh was adopted by a family who understood he needed more guidance and continued training to become the best boy he could be...just like his namesake. “I knew punishing him wasn’t the right approach, so I followed Josh around the house one day and observed what he got into, then simply removed those temptations. He already had so many changes in his life that we wanted him to feel comfortable before serious training began.”

Now that he’s been with Becky and Jeremy for several months, they have started obedience classes focused on positive reinforcement, and they can see improvements already in Josh’s behavior.

Take a page out of any football playbook and you’ll see training and practice are key to a successful team. Josh’s new family agrees with that call and believe they clearly won the Super Bowl when they welcomed him home.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Carol Forsberg

As we begin a new year of GRRMF rescue services and celebrate our sixth year of Hearts of Gold therapy dog services, we reflect on our continued strong reputation in our community. You are the reason GRRMF is still successful entering our 33rd year, continuing to grow and expand our programs for our dogs and the people we serve. 2023 continued to be impacted with post pandemic outcomes for dogs including the financial and behavioral struggles of families who needed to rehome their retrievers. We shared so much joy and too much grief in a year of wellness challenges. We saw the continuing growth in volume in all areas including increased expenses.

Here are some of the amazing metrics reflecting our outcomes in 2023, and we are starting 2024 with the continuing momentum from last year.



- **Dogs saved/Intake** 129 dogs - 74% goldens, 11% Labrador retrievers, 15% golden blend or golden hearts. 30% increase in intake vs 2022. Ready to do more in 2024.
- **Applications** 683 applications received, 205 approved. Increase of 25% in applications received vs 2022. Passionate people want our rescue dogs.
- **Transportation** Safe passage of 439 trips across 50,027 miles. Human paws on the wheels.
- **Medical care** 406 vet/specialist appointments. Medical expense \$229,409. Our commitment to physical wellness for every dog.
- **Behavioral training care** 168 training sessions. Training expense \$21,024. Mental health and foundational tools for the special needs of our dogs.
- **Adoptions** 109 dogs adopted with our adoption team doing a wonderful job of matching and placement with families who can meet each dog's needs. Our post adoption team completed 382 post adoption follow up calls for our dogs and their forever family wellness.
- **Hearts of Gold** 591 visits totaling 1,809 hours with 89 active teams at year's end. We are so proud of our newest program and all the volunteers with their furry ambassadors who bring comfort to people in our communities.

I introduced the "next generation of GRRMF" concept in our November 2023 newsletter. This focus will gain momentum in 2024 with the following activities in place for this quarter:

- **Expand** the talent and tenure on our board of directors for future leadership
- **Launch** Volunteer Forum calls to expand communication channels and rescue education
- **Coordinate** succession planning through on boarding, mentoring and promoting existing talent who are ready to spread their wings further

I encourage you to contact me at volunteer@grrmf.org if you have been thinking about becoming a volunteer or more involved in our rescue with your passion and available time. Please know that you are a part of the GRRMF family. Your support through donations, dog adoptions, and volunteering makes you an integral part of our success to achieve our mission and our next generation vision. We are honored and thank you for your continued partnership.



We are excited to begin our sixth year of bringing comfort and joy to others during a therapy visit. Many new facilities and events were added during 2023 and we continue to see growth and interest in our therapy program as we head into a new year. Hearts of Gold currently has 89 handler teams consisting of GRRMF rescues and family pets of all breeds and gene mixtures whose hearts are golden. We welcome teams already certified with other organizations. Our 2024 spring calendar has therapy teams scheduled to attend two major conferences in Tampa - Soaring Spirits International Camp Widow (March) and MGFA National Patient Conference (April). Our compassionate pups are helping students with stress relief during exams, opening communication gaps with seniors, involved with reading programs in schools and libraries, and bringing smiles to those in memory care centers and hospitals throughout mid-Florida.

We invite anyone interested in learning more about the rewarding world of therapy work to visit our website or reach out to us at GRRMFtherappups@grrmf.org. Upcoming screening dates and locations are being scheduled for 2024 and posted on the website. Paws-awhile and watch our special pups in action by visiting their very own "GRRMF Hearts of Gold YouTube" channel. Don't have a dog but want to support the therapy program, send us an email and we can match your special skill set to a rewarding volunteer task. Visit our website www.grrmf.org/grrmf-hearts-of-gold-therapy-team/ to learn more about the program or to request a visit from our special pups.



GIVING THANKS FOR YOU!

Our sincere gratitude for our donors who sustained us throughout 2023. We were honored by those who gave above and beyond during our Giving Tuesday campaign in November 2023, helping us raise over \$52,000 for our medical fund. In 2024, we are launching a new gift giving fund called Golden Guardian. This empowers you to set up an automatic recurring monthly donation for any amount you can contribute to become an ongoing guardian for our organization. Your scheduled recurring commitment will help us grow our community outreach Rescue and Hearts of Gold programs to achieve our mission in 2024 and beyond. With the accelerated costs of dog care, your treasured monthly donation gives us a more secure foundation each month to fund our medical and behavior expenses, which continue to increase during these fluctuating economic times.



To become a Golden Guardian, use this link: <https://givebutter.com/GRRMFRecurringDonation>

TRAINING THE OWNER, NOT NECESSARILY THE DOG

by Jennifer Geiger

Our dogs' ability to understand how we're feeling is one of the reasons we have such a special bond with them. And our emotions and body language can influence our dog's behavior, for better or for worse. Most dog owners will agree their pooch truly does understand them. I've known a few dogs in my life who knew the English language very well, particularly treat, who's-that, squirrel and ever popular go-for-a-walk. But dogs read more into our tone, body language and non-verbal cues than our actual spoken words. They watch our facial expressions, posture, and body movements to understand what's going on in the moment. You may be speaking volumes to your pet without even knowing what message you are sending. Here are the top three non-verbal cues your dog picks up on most.



■ Eye Contact Among the non-verbal gestures dogs rely on, the most important may be eye contact and the direction of a gaze. A human-to-dog gaze is a great way to build a positive connection with your pet. But when it comes to a new dog on the street, or one you don't know well, try using peripheral vision instead of eye-to-eye contact.

■ Pointing Dogs are especially good at reading gestures like pointing. They can even figure out novel movements, such as pointing with your foot instead of your fingers. Have you noticed if you point at a toy, they will look at it most of the time?

■ Emotions Dogs mirror human emotions, and that means our ups as well as our downs. For instance, when on a walk with your dog, keep your energy calm and relaxed, even if you don't feel that way inside. Dogs will start to act and react

much like their owners do. The calmer you are around new things, the calmer your dog will be.

Don't be fooled, your dog can read you like a book. They understand our emotions quicker than our words. If you work on your non-verbal cues, soon speaking the word treat will be replaced with a simple glance towards the kitchen. Verbally asking if they want to go outside will be replaced with a finger pointed toward the door. And a connected gaze into their eyes while smiling could magically get you a head nuzzle in your lap.

PRESIDENTIAL PETS

Dog owners stand proud, you have more in common with U.S. presidents than you think! Dogs are by far the most popular presidential pet with 30 out of 45 commanders in chiefs having one in the White House. While George Washington did own dogs, it's actually John Adams who is credited as being our first leader to have a furry friend. This due to the fact that the White House was not finished while Washington was in office. Presidents have owned dogs for many reasons. Some simply for the love and companionship dogs bring, others for superficial reasons; to distract attention from scandals or to make them seem more likable and down to earth. Gerald Ford is the only president to own a golden retriever. Major, Joe Biden's dog, is the first rescue. Jimmy Carter used his dog Grits to promote his animal health-centered campaign. Franklin Delano Roosevelt took his Scottish terrier Fala everywhere, including overseas trips and meetings with foreign dignitaries. Often Fala received more publicity than FDR when they were abroad.



See if you can match the dog to the president and remember you are in some very good company! Happy President's Day.

1. James Buchanan
2. Theodore Roosevelt
3. John F. Kennedy
4. Ronald Regan
5. George H. W. Bush
6. Barack Obama

- A. Sailor Boy, a Chesapeake Bay retriever
- B. Bo & Sunny, both Portuguese water dogs
- C. Rex, a King Charles spaniel
- D. Charlie, a Welsh terrier
- E. Lara, a Newfoundland
- F. Millie, a Springer spaniel

Answers: 1-E, 2-A, 3-D, 4-C, 5-F, 6-B



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: MARY WELLS

by Jamie Demsky

How did you first learn about GRRMF?

I found GRRMF in 2010 through an online search for golden retriever rescues in Florida. Since then, we've adopted five dogs, four from GRRMF. We always went for older dogs, but in 2020 we adopted a two-year-old. A year later we adopted a second pup. Because of our positive experience with adopting through GRRMF, I decided they would be at the top of the list of organizations with which to volunteer upon retirement.

How many years have you been volunteering? Four years.

What volunteer roles have you done so far? Media team: writer, content creator, social media coordinator; Events: East coast events and Jupiter Golden Jubilee; Fundraising: GivingTuesday, giving grids and other online campaigns; Post Adoption: follow up call coordinator.



What is your most cherished volunteer moment? Picking up a surrendered golden from his owner – the dog was obviously neglected, but so trusting and affectionate during transport.

Is there something about being a GRRMF volunteer that changed you? Learning it's not a problem to say, "no," "not right now," or "I need some help." The support and encouragement from our volunteer leaders have helped me stay balanced and avoid burning out.

What surprised you about volunteering for GRRMF? How well you can work together without physically being in the same location. This is the only group for which I was able to continue to volunteer throughout the pandemic!

What would be your best advice to a potential volunteer for GRRMF? Just do it! Express your interests and try different roles.

What is it that touches your heart most often about GRRMF? The dedication and compassion of our volunteers to serve people and dogs in need.

In Memoriam Jerry Sheehan - December 31, 2023

We mourn the loss of our cherished volunteer, Jerry Sheehan, and celebrate his life well lived. Our prayers for comfort are wrapped around his family. After an incredible 44 year career commitment in aerospace supporting the U.S. space program, Jerry's passion for trains, travel and rescue filled his retirement years. A transporter and foster with his wife and rescue partner, Judy, Jerry was known as the dog whisperer who loved fostering the younger dogs and helping them become ready for their loving forever home. Rest in peace Jerry with all the GRRMF pups you saved for the past 13 years. www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/rockledge-fl/gerald-sheehan-11608971



RAINBOW BRIDGE

Kym and David Arter and GRRMF Family - Bailey
Sherry Ayres - Bentley
Rodger and Nancy Benchoff - Tanner
Sara Lynn Gibbs and GRRMF family - Maggie
Herman and Jo Ann Green - Molly Sallie
Dan and Vanessa Hardy - Charlie
Barry Holliday - Cimba
Kathleen and Albert Iosue and GRRMF family - Cassie
Marilee Jett - Jake

Vicki and Danny Piloseno - Jake
Michelle and Walter Powers and GRRMF family - Barney
Nancy Love - Sophie
Marcia McGovern and GRRMF Family - Lucy
Chris and Vicki Middleton - Bentley
Kathy Minor and Gerry Hart and GRRMF Family - Henk
Terri and Mark Starcher - Teeson
Linda Van Pelt - Gracie
Ginger and George Vincent - Rocky



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Golden Retriever Rescue of Mid-Florida
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WHAT'S NEW ON THE WEB?

GRRMF 2024 Calendar (last chance) - www.grrmf.org/grrmf-2024-calendar-order/
2024 Scheduled Events - www.grrmf.org/about/upcoming-events/
Golden Guardian recurring donations - www.grrmf.org/setting-recurring-payments/
Info Thursday learn library - www.grrmf.org/info-thursday/
Volunteer help needed - www.grrmf.org/we-need-you/
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School support for GRRMF - www.grrmf.org/news/grrmf-banner-program/
I'm a Retriever - www.grrmf.org/our-retriever-family/

Please be our financial caregiver to save our retrievers through your donation.
You may donate online at www.grrmf.org/donate, use the QR code below or fill out this form
and mail it to: GRRMF - P.O. Box 1449 - Goldenrod, FL 32733.

To set up a Golden Guardian scheduled electronic recurring donation, matching gift
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A copy of the official registration and financial information for Golden Retriever Rescue of Mid-Florida Inc., a Florida-based nonprofit corporation, (Registration no. #CH11185), may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling toll free 1.800.help.fl (432.7352) within the state or by visiting 800helpfla.com. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state.

33 YEARS OF SAVING GOLDENS – 4,245 SAVED SINCE 1991
Golden Retriever Rescue of Mid-Florida