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needle **nose** news

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From the President ...

2009 will be another greyt year for GAGC adoptions and events. We are planning our GAGC Family Picnic again on Memorial Day weekend, so mark your calendars. This is such a rewarding event for us to gather together all the dogs we've placed over the years. Hope to see you there.

We ended 2008 with 55 placements. We were able to help many dogs from West Virginia, Florida and three very lucky dogs from New Hampshire that were in desperate need. We lost a lot of our good greyhound friends in 2008. GAGC has been in existence seven years now and I guess this is only normal to hear of losses like we have had this year. I believe that to honor those we have lost, we should adopt another greyhound to give it a chance at a good life like our pups had. I will add to my family again in 2009. *Editor's note: Brenda, Ron and Jim welcomed Bernie on Jan. 7!*

A big thank you to all of you for supporting GAGC — we have 237 members on our roster. Some are more active than others, but we appreciate all of you for giving the retired racing greyhounds a good home. Thanks



again for making your Greyhound Adoption of Greater Cincinnati organization a huge success. It takes all of us to keep it successful.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our officers. You will never know the hours they put in to keep GAGC running smoothly. Their willingness to do whatever it takes keeps everything in balance. Thanks!

Brenda

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Adopting a retired racer: \$200 ...

Having a friend for life: Priceless!

Greyt Health & Safety

Forbidden Fruit: Popular Avocado Can Poison Your Pet

from the ASPCA

A slice of avocado may be the perfect addition to your sandwich, but it can have serious consequences for our feathered and furry friends. According to the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center in Urbana, IL, pet poisonings from avocado and avocado-based foods like guacamole are a consistent risk. In 2008, the Center managed 115 cases involving ingestions of avocado, and though an overwhelming 83 percent of those incidents involved dogs, the most devastating effects were seen in birds, rabbits and certain large animals like horses and cattle.

A native of Central and South America, avocado (*Persea americana*) is a subtropical tree that produces a pear-shaped fruit prized for its high fat content, vitamin-rich “meat” and smooth texture. Unfortunately, the

fruit also contains a toxin called persin that’s harmful to animals, especially in large quantities.

“Avocado leaves, fruit, seeds and bark all contain the toxic principle known as persin,” says Dana Farbman, CVT, Senior Manager of Professional Communications at APCC. Guatemalan varieties — sold in grocery stores nationwide — are most often involved in pet exposures, Farbman adds, while other strains have varying degrees of toxic potential. Birds — who accounted for 5 percent of avocado cases in 2008 — appear to be particularly sensitive to the fatty fruit; consumption can result in respiratory distress, congestion, fluid accumulation around the heart and even death. In curious canines, clinical signs of ingestion can include gastrointestinal distress, vomiting and diarrhea. Typically, these effects are seen in dogs who’ve nibbled on significant amounts of a tree’s fruit or branches.

As always, if you suspect your pet has eaten something toxic, please call your vet or the ASPCA’s 24-hour hotline at (888) 426-4435. For more information about people food that’s toxic for pets, please visit ASPCA online at www.aspc.org and click on Animal Poison Control.

Dog Racing in Massachusetts

Some interesting results came out of November’s election. Massachusetts voted to end greyhound racing at the state’s two tracks by Jan. 1, 2010. With Massachusetts out of the picture, the greyhound racing states left are: Arkansas, Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, New Hampshire, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, West Virginia and Wisconsin. Christine Dorchak of the Committee to Protect Dogs said her group has



enlisted nearly 100 veterinarians and has animal hospitals and major animal shelters standing by to help deal with the Massachusetts greyhounds as they transition out of racing. In the 1980s there were more than 50,000 greyhounds bred each year to race at about 60 tracks nationwide. This year, the number of dogs will drop to under 20,000 and the number of tracks has been cut almost in half.

Reminder

Since this is the time of year to buy 2009 county dog tags, it’s also a good time to remind everyone to check the ID tags on their pets to make sure that their contact information is up to date (i.e., phone numbers, addresses, etc.). Let’s keep our dogs safe!



Greyhound Adoption of Greater Cincinnati, Inc.

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Formed in 2002, GAGC’s mission is to strive for the best quality placements. We focus on being small and doing things right. We recognize that we cannot save all the greyhounds in the world, but we can make a difference to the ones we touch.

needlenosenews staff:

GAGC President: Brenda Pennix
Editor: Kathy Evans
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The Bella Fund Project

Mitchell Treier, 13, is doing a school project on greyhound rescue. He is taking this project very seriously and seems extremely dedicated to his efforts. His family was very involved in greyhound rescue many years ago, and they intend to adopt a greyhound from GAGC when their new fence is completed. Mitchell went to Brenda's house for an interview, asking good questions about retired racers. He was excited to learn more about the breed and what GAGC does to help the dogs. If any of you would be interested in helping him out with any donation, he will appreciate it and GAGC will benefit from his efforts. Thanks in advance. Below is a message from Mitch:

Hello,

Here is my Greyhound project:

My goal is to save as many greyhounds as possible. I am planning to collect money for The Bella Fund (in honor of our late greyhound, **Bella**.) My ideas for raising money are to collect donations and to set up a coin vortex. My goal is to help as many greyhounds as possible. My measurable goal will be to save five Florida greyhounds. I will give to you (GAGC) the money collected to aid these greyhounds. If this money would benefit a sick greyhound, I would like you to also feel free to use the funds for medical aid. I hope I reach my goal and make a change.

If anyone would like to make a donation to The Bella Fund, please have them send it to:

Mitchell Treier/The Bella Fund
1642 Squires Wood Court
Milford, OH 45150

Sincerely,
Mitch Treier
The Bella Fund

"It's the best bet you will ever make."



Santa Photos

The event at the Beaver Creek PetSmart on Dec. 21 was very well attended — we took over 50 photos which means GAGC earned over \$250 from this event. Thanks to *Larry and Drew* for each taking a shift as Santa, and to *Vanessa, Angela, Andrew, Kathy, John, Meg, Tim, Becky and Jeremy* for handling the photography, paperwork and M&G duties. The greyhound helpers included **Bubba and India, Zoey and Mimi, and Sol and Riley**. **Louie** the Yorkie was the day's greyhound wannabe.

Pet Photos in Mason

Thanks to County Animal Hospital and Midwest Boston Terrier rescue for hosting the Pictures with Santa in Mason on Dec. 14. It was a fun day and we saw mostly greyhounds for the holiday photos, thanks to members of GAGC. Thanks to *Bob* for being Santa for two hours and our other volunteers, *Marsha, Vanessa, Jodie, Dave, Jennifer, Karyn, Betsy and Craig, and Brenda*. Again thanks for your support.

Pet Sitters

Do you need a pet sitter for your greys while you're out of town? Brenda has an updated list of GAGC members willing to pet sit. We're also looking for more folks willing to be pet sitters, both for the Dayton and the Cincinnati areas. Let Brenda know if you are interested.

Newsletter Photos or Articles Needed

If you have good photos of your hounds, please send them in as we might choose to use them for the newsletter. If you have something you want to share for the newsletter, send it in to Kathy or Brenda.

Annual GAGC Board of Director's Meeting

Our 2009 meeting will be on Jan. 17. Attendees include the officers and members of the board, but we also invite our M&G representatives and others who have given of their time and energy to support GAGC. Will you get an invitation for 2010?

Pet-friendly lodging

Looking for pet-friendly lodging when you go on vacation? The following web site will give you listings of lodgings that accept both you and your dogs: www.petswelcome.com.



Congratulations!

Jim and Amy of *Beavercreek* and greyhounds **Dexter and Dharma** have welcomed a new family member. Their son *Isaac* couldn't wait to make an appearance, coming a few days early on Dec. 2. He was 7 pounds, 20½ inches and is healthy and doing well. Everyone is adjusting. *Dharma* wants to mother him because when he cries, she is instantly there, ears up, whining!

We recently learned that *Brian and Gillian* of *Cincinnati* welcomed their new baby *Bennett* in early June. The family established a blog chronicling life after losing a greyhound and adding a baby at heartacheandhomearts.blogspot.com. Greyhound **Penny** has been adjusting well as an only dog. *Bennett's* just discovered he has his very own puppy in the house and is in love! And the feeling's mutual!

Web Master

Our dedicated web master *Norm* has recently moved from *Cincinnati* to *New Hampshire* to be closer to family, although he continues to support us long-distance for now. We've had well over 57,000 hits on the GAGC web site. Thank you, *Norm*, for your years of support for greyhound adoption.

Thanks

Thanks to the manager of *Western Hills PetSmart* where *Jodi* holds her Meet & Greet. The manager donated nine 44-pound bags of *Nutro* dog food. We'll be able to use this for our foster dogs. *PetSmart* continues to be very supportive of our greyhound adoption efforts and we are very grateful to them.

Meg continues to donate hand-made collars to GAGC to sell, and we are very grateful for her continuing support. Check out her web site at www.4myhounds.com.

Dog runs

On Nov. 8, *Vanessa and Dave*, and *Vanessa's* brother *Drew* traveled to *Columbus* to collect some dogs coming to us from *Melbourne, Florida*. *Drew* is a senior at *Xenia High School* and was doing volunteer hours for *National Honor Society* by helping with the dog run. After much-needed baths at the *Pet Palace* (which generously donates the use of their facilities to us), they brought back three clean dogs — **Steve Irwin, Destry Doris and Icon Ledger** destined for new homes. Thanks to all of them for their support.

Brenda, Vanessa and *Vanessa's* sister *Angela* did the dog run on Nov. 16, meeting the hauler in *Huber Heights* to get three dogs from a closing *New Hampshire* track. These dogs were destined to be sold to a lab, so we were particularly glad to be able to help out by taking **Maddie, Austin and Bridgette**. They had traveled 14 hours from *NH* to *Toledo* to *Huber Heights*. There was one problem — these dogs had not yet been spayed and neutered.

Here's *Brenda's* description of the ride: "Thanks to all the help *Vanessa* and her sister *Angela* gave me on the dog run to *Huber Heights*. It was the first time I had dogs that had not been altered on a dog run. I'll remind you we

picked up two females and one male. *Austin*, the lone male, REALLY liked the females and must have known it was his first and last chance for hanky-panky. He tried several times to get friendly with *Maddie* and *Bridgette*, so *Vanessa* and *Angela* crawled into the back of the van to keep him away from the girls. Well, that's when it got funny! *Vanessa* fell and *Austin* tried to take advantage of her TOO! The three of us laughed all the way down *I-75*. My van was definitely rock'n!"

Editor's note: It turned out one of the girls was in heat!

We learned our lesson about intact male and female greyhounds from the *New Hampshire* dog run. On Jan. 3, *Brenda, Kathy and Vanessa* hit the road early in the morning for *West Virginia* and came back with four dogs — three boys and a girl — none of which had been spayed or neutered. They managed to rig a divider in the van so that **Gointobridlewood (Isabel)** had her private space, keeping her away from the attentions of **Jags Woodcock (Woody), Burninupthegreen (Bernie)** and **BBF Gangway (Goober)**. We owe a big thank you to **Harris** — one of *Vanessa's* cats — who went with them on the run to cat-test the dogs at the *West Virginia* adoption kennel.



Foster Families

A big thank you goes to our foster families:

Vanessa — **WV's Knapp**

Karri and Jeff — **Maddie**

Angie and Ron — **Icon Ledger**

Kathy — **Clyde Cobble** for one night

Diane — **Clyde Cobble**

Melody — **Clyde Cobble**

Jennifer — **Icon Ledger**

Carol and Russ — **Austin**

Theresa and Dave — **Bridgette**

Denise and Jeff — **Bridgette**

Future Foster Homes

We continue to need both non-cat families and cat families to help us foster. We REALLY appreciate the families that have stepped up to help us foster, but most have cats, and so often we need homes without cats. PLEASE let us know if you would consider fostering in the future. The availability of foster families impacts our decision on how many greyhounds we can save when participating in dog runs. Won't you consider helping?

Current Foster Dogs

Are you ready for another greyhound? We have the following dogs in foster care:

Clyde Cobble – Clyde is a laid-back brindle male who gets along with cats, other dogs, horses, birds, you name it. This is a very sweet boy who is 9 years old and weighs about 80 pounds. His previous family was no longer able to give him the attention he deserved due to health problems. Clyde has unfortunately had most of his teeth pulled due to dental disease, but he is very friendly and remains Mr. Personality Plus.

Isabel – This beautiful greyhound came into town on Jan. 3 from West Virginia. Isabel is a big girl weighing

71 pounds. She's white and red, very sweet, and is 4 years old.

Please call the dog line at (513) 624-7040 or your local placement representative if you are interested in adding one of these beauties to your family.

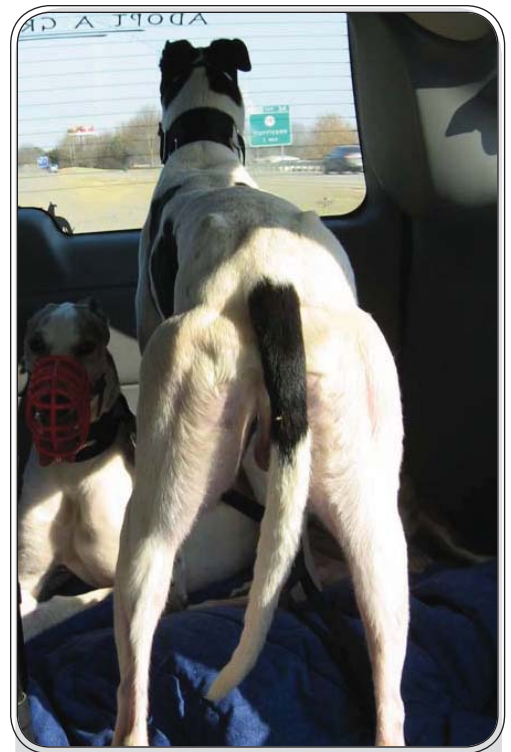
Donations

It's bittersweet to report that many of the monetary donations to GAGC in December were in memory of *Brenda and Ron's Elroy* and *Kathy's Taboo*. We gratefully acknowledge the following donors: *Debbie; Brad and Cindy; Keith and Mary; Angie; Ed and Amy; Jennifer; Howard and June; Kathy; Jeff, Tal, Stephen, Danielle and Adina; Darrell and Peggy; Joyce; Dick and Arlene; Peg and Wiley; Vanessa and Dave; Trudy and Lindo; June; and Brenda and Ron*. In addition, *Pat and Gary* donated a book to the Cincinnati Public Library with a dedication label in memory of **Elroy**.

Adoption Note

GAGC was created in October 2002. We placed just three dogs that year. GAGC's original goal was to find one dog a good home each month. As you can see from the following, we have well surpassed our goals, thanks to you.

- 2003: 28 dogs found their homes
- 2004: 44 dogs found their homes
- 2005: 49 dogs found their homes
- 2006: 73 dogs found their homes
- 2007: 58 dogs found their homes
- 2008: 55 dogs found their forever homes!



Recent Adoptions

Destry Doris (now **Dory**): Nov. 8 to *Joe and Rebecca* of Fairfield.

Steve Irwin (now **Cooper**): Nov. 8 to *Zach, Josh, Margie, Frank and Andrew* of Mason.

WV's Knapp: Nov. 22 to *Spike and Lynn* of Cincinnati.

Maddie: Nov. 28 to *Karri, Jeff, Anneliese and Will* of Centerville.

Viola: Nov. 28 to *Althea and Bret* of Cincinnati.

Bridgette: Dec. 14 to *Denise and Jeff* of Anderson Township.

M's Icon Ledger: Dec. 22 to *Jennifer* of Oakley.

Burninupthegreen (now **Bernie**, pictured above on his way to his forever home): Jan. 7 to *Brenda, Ron and Jim* of Liberty Township.

Jags Woodcock (now **Woody**): Jan. 9 to *Holly* of Dayton.

BBF Gangway (now **Admiral**): Jan. 9 to *Jeanie, Bob, Ben, Emily and Maggie* of Beaver Creek.



Our Condolences

Editor's Note: Every time we lose a greyhound, GAGC makes a donation to the Department of Veterinary Clinical Services at Ohio State University's College of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Guillermo Couto and his colleagues have built one of the finest greyhound health and wellness programs in the world. GAGC hopes that someday, they can determine why so many greyhounds are struck down prematurely by cancer and other causes.

Rachel and Brandon lost **Litz**, their first greyhound, to bone cancer on Jan. 7. He was very special to them and to their family, and he will truly be missed.

We send our sympathy to **Tim, Sandy and Samantha** who had to have their greyhound **Pretzel** euthanized due to cancer on Dec. 23. When the cancer was found in his leg, his prognosis was grim, so they made the difficult decision to end his pain. From the family: "We were so happy to have him in our life and he will be missed by all who knew him."

We extend our condolences to **Kathy** who lost her sweet boy **Taboo** to bone cancer on Dec. 17. Taboo raced out the door after a squirrel that

morning, slipped on the ice and broke his leg badly. X-rays revealed extensive bone cancer. Ten-year-old Taboo was Kathy's first greyhound, and was a very special boy, greeting many of you at M&Gs and charming you during adoption interviews. No doubt he's chasing squirrels now at the Rainbow Bridge.

Our heartfelt sympathy goes to **Brenda and Ron** who had to have their dear **Elroy** put to sleep on Dec. 4 after several months of failing health. Elroy was their first greyhound and one of the first hounds many of us ever met. He was a wonderful ambassador for GAGC and made many of us want one of these wonderful dogs all the more.

GAGC wishes to extend our sympathy to **Donna and Jim** for the loss of their dear sweet **Molly (WV's Dott)** in late November. She was only 6 years old and suffered a catastrophic stroke. Donna is truly heartbroken with the

"Cherish [your greyhound] and give him place with yourself for the rest of his but too short life. It is his one drawback. He should live as long as his owner."

—James Matheson, author

passing of her heart dog.

Our sympathy to **Jennifer** on the loss of her beloved greyhound **Jackson** on Nov. 22. His health had deteriorated to the point where he was no longer able to stand on his own. From Jennifer: "He can never be replaced as he was the once-in-a-lifetime dog."

Spike and Lynn and greyhound **Jordan** lost their beloved friend **Hopa** on Nov. 15. Hopa was a 13-year-old cocker spaniel who helped Jordan transition to his forever home almost a year ago. Jordan and family were grieving for her loss so much that the family adopted **Knapp** in late November. Now Jordan will do the training for transition.

GAGC wishes to express our deepest sympathy to **Megan** on the untimely death of her husband, **Brian**. Brian was just 36 years old. Brian and Megan adopted greyhounds **N Monte** and **USS Late Night**, and Brian was a loving parent to both. We know that both greyhounds and Megan are having a difficult time with Brian's passing. Please keep Megan in your thoughts and prayers. On a side note, Brian's brother's company, Shand Moran & Company, Inc. made a donation to GAGC in Brian's memory.

Special Note: If your beloved greyhound goes to Rainbow Bridge and you would like to share a line or two about him or her, please forward us a picture and your memorial statement for an up coming newsletter. High-resolution photos are best — 300 dpi. If they are 72 dpi, they should no smaller than 4 inches on the shortest side.

Tribute to Elroy

It's with a VERY heavy heart that I inform you that *Ron* and I lost **Elroy** on Dec. 4. He was our first greyhound, but certainly not our last. Elroy was having a tremendous amount of trouble walking and eating. Ron slept in the family room with him the last several weeks offering support, and we had a special harness made for him that we used to help him walk. Our vet tried everything. There would be some improvement, then another relapse. The vet concluded Elroy had stomach cancer because he lost over 16 pounds. On the 4th, Elroy looked at us telling us it was time. It was so hard to let him go but we know it was the right thing to do.

He was such a big part of GAGC and so many dogs were adopted due to families falling in love with our boy! He was a terrific M&G dog, never knowing a stranger and always representing the greyhound breed well. We

went for lots of walks and Elroy would be offended if someone passing didn't stop to pet him. The way he'd see through me and cock his head knowing exactly what I was saying or thinking — he never disappointed us. I'll never forget his funky ears. Pat always commented that she never saw ears like his on any other grey. He was definitely unique in many ways. He was the leader of our pack and our girls miss him. He was my best friend and NO other dog will ever come close to replacing him.

I want to thank all of you who responded to our loss with so many beautiful cards and donations in Elroy's memory to GAGC. This was such an honor for us to know you all felt the same way about our boy! He was special to all who knew him. *Pat and Gary's Quinn* and Elroy were the initial



ambassadors of GAGC and were solely responsible for us starting this organization. We wanted everyone to know how wonderful greyhounds are. Elroy is now with Quinn and **Taboo** and some of your greys at the bridge chasing rabbits and waiting for us to join them again some day!

— Brenda

Tribute to Taboo

Taboo was my first greyhound. We made a special connection in the first moment we met in June 2003 when I threw my arms around him and hugged him (despite what the books advised), and he was a mama's boy ever since. If I moved around the room,

his eyes followed me. If I left the room, I could count on him to come find me. I couldn't have asked for a better companion. I sometimes called him "Mr. Perfect" because he never had an accident in the house, he never chewed anything he wasn't supposed to, he was a terrific M&G dog, and most importantly, he loved me as much as I loved him. He had an endearing habit of crossing one front foot over the other when lying down, and when he was happy, his tail wagged up and down like a pump handle. He was the alpha of my greyhound pack, but was very subtle and soft spoken in the way he handled that job.

I lost my sweet boy to bone cancer on Dec. 17. He

slipped on the ice that morning, broke his leg badly, and X-rays revealed the cancer. At 10-years-old, I was not going to put him through amputation or chemotherapy. Bone cancer in greyhounds is very painful and spreads very fast so the only real choice was euthanasia. We ended our time together with a final hug, as I held him until his heart stopped. The hardest part about loving dogs is knowing when to let them go, and it was time for Taboo. I miss my boy terribly, but he had a good life with me and I understand this is all part of sharing my life with animals — they leave us much too soon.

I received many wonderful cards and messages of condolence. Thank you all for your friendship and support. Greyhounds attract some of the very finest people.

— Kathy



Show Your Support

GAGC can always use your support! Here are a few ways to help!

Go Krogering!



The Kroger gift card program continues to be a very significant fund raiser for GAGC. Visit

the "Support Us" link on the GAGC web site to get all the details on this gift card program. We receive a \$200 donation from Kroger each time our group achieves \$5,000 in total purchases. These steady donations are frequently used to cover vet expenses for new greyhounds in need. We welcome our newest members! Here are the amounts of our latest awards:

- Oct. 5 – Nov. 1: \$308.20 (this helped offset our expenses for the New Hampshire dogs)
- Nov. 2 – 29: \$275.53
- Nov. 30 – Dec. 27: \$377.40 (this covered some of our costs for the vetting of the latest WV dogs)

Do a Meet-and-Greet

Join us at a GAGC Meet-and-Greet to introduce people to our beautiful greyhounds.



Times for all Cincinnati area Meet-and-Greets are noon to 2 p.m. Dayton-area Meet-and-Greets (Beavercreek and Dayton Mall) have changed their times to 1 to 3 p.m. They are on Sundays at the following PetsMart locations:

• 1st Sunday of the month: Eastgate
• 2nd Sunday: Beavercreek (in the Dayton area) and Tri-County
• 3rd Sunday: Oakley, Western Hills and Dayton Mall
• 4th Sunday: Fairfield and Mason

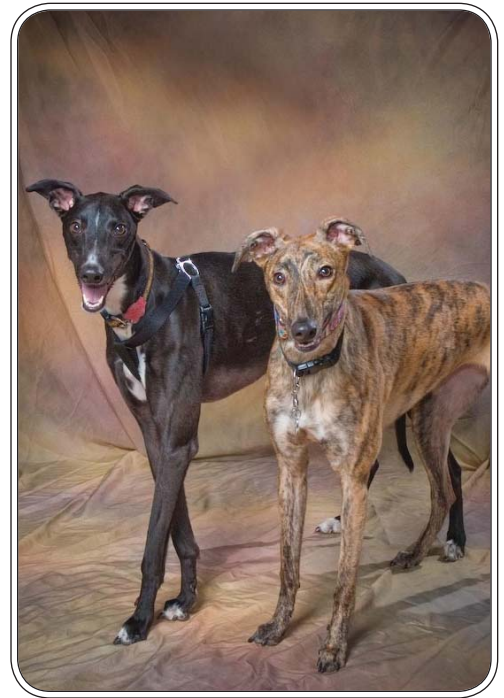
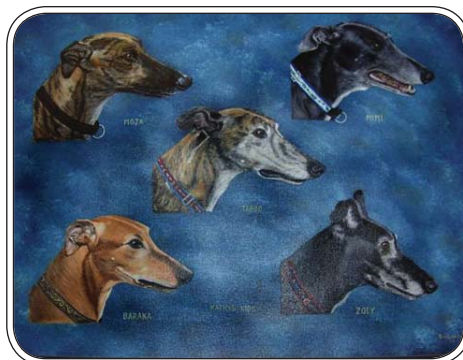
- 1st Sunday of the month: Eastgate
- 2nd Sunday: Beavercreek (in the Dayton area) and Tri-County
- 3rd Sunday: Oakley, Western Hills and Dayton Mall
- 4th Sunday: Fairfield and Mason

Help! New M&G representatives are

needed for the Mason PetSmart. This M&G is the 4th Sunday of every month from noon to 2 p.m. Mason is a nice new store right on Mason Montgomery Road. Please find it in your heart to help by representing GAGC at this M&G. *Angie* is willing to take the lead but we still need others to bring their greyhounds and help out. Call the dog line (513) 624-7040 or e-mail Brenda at brpennix@aol.com if you need more information.

Greyhound Paintings

GAGC member Ron Lightner is an amateur painter who started painting horses as a hobby and has moved up to greyhounds! He will paint from any photo you have of your dog(s). Ron's rates are very reasonable and he does a fabulous job. Brenda and Kathy both have paintings done by Ron and can highly recommend his work. He'll even frame your painting under glass for a little extra charge. Ron donates a portion of his proceeds to GAGC. Feel free to contact him at rracingron@fuse.net or (513) 777-7491.



Pet Photography

Virgil Sweeden is a long time member of GAGC and has his own business taking pet photos at a reasonable price. He is available to take photos of your greyhounds, other pets or human family members. For pet photos, he'll come to your home if you prefer, to make your pets more comfortable. Contact him at Virgil@PawPrintsPet.com or visit his web site at www.PawPrintsPet.com.

"To live with greyhounds is to live with beauty. There is no escaping it."

—Alice Sebold, author

Mark your calendars for these Greyt events



April 24 – 26: *Greyhounds in Gettysburg.* For further information, please go to trianglegreyhound.org/gig.

May 2: *Annual Flying Pig Marathon volunteer event* from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. More details to follow.

May 28 – 31: *Mountain Hounds in Gatlinburg.* For more information, go to www.gfncmountainhounds.com. It's tons of fun and the greyhounds love the special attention they get. The web site will be updated shortly with information for 2009, as well as pictures from last year and a recap of the survey. We are very excited to have Dr. Couto from Ohio State speaking on Saturday. Dr. Couto is a professor of hematology and oncology at Ohio State University's Veterinary school.

A Dog's Purpose

Being a veterinarian, I had been called to examine a 10-year-old Irish Wolfhound named Belker. The dog's owners, Ron, his wife Lisa, and their little boy Shane, were all very attached to Belker, and they were hoping for a miracle. I examined Belker and found he was dying of cancer. I told the family we couldn't do anything for Belker, and offered to perform the euthanasia procedure for the old dog in their home. As we made arrangements, Ron and Lisa told me they thought it would be good for 6-year-old Shane to observe the procedure. They felt as though Shane might learn something from the experience.

The next day, I felt the familiar catch in my throat as Belker's family surrounded him. Shane seemed so calm, petting the old dog for the last time, that I wondered if he understood what was going on. Within a few minutes, Belker slipped peacefully away. The little boy seemed to accept Belker's transition without any difficulty or confusion. We sat together for a while after Belker's death, wondering aloud about the sad fact that animal lives are shorter than human lives. Shane, who had been listening quietly, piped up, "I know why."

Startled, we all turned to him. What came out of his mouth next stunned me. I'd never heard a more comforting explanation. He said, "People are born so that they can learn how to live a good life — like loving everybody all the time and being nice, right?" The 6-year-old continued, "Well, dogs already know how to do that, so they don't have to stay as long."



If a dog was the teacher, you would learn things like:

- When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.
- Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joyride.
- Allow fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy.
- Take naps.
- Stretch before rising.
- Run, romp and play daily.
- Thrive on attention and let people touch you.
- Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.

- On warm days, stop to lie on your back on the grass.
- On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree.
- When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body.
- Delight in the simple joy of a long walk.
- Be loyal.
- Never pretend to be something you're not.
- If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it.
- When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them gently.