

Colorado Greyhound Adoption



By Jennifer M. Brauns

You are probably familiar with the concept of greyhound racing, but what becomes of these dogs when their athletic career is over? Colorado Greyhound Adoption (CGA) got its start in 1997 when it split off from another greyhound adoption group. Their efforts are altogether different from other adoption groups. Here is their story.

CGA took in approximately 300 greyhounds last year with 208 of these dogs coming from racing kennels. While most breed-specific rescue groups scour shelters to locate dogs that need rehoming, CGA's dogs are not really rescued. The dogs have grown up in the racing world and are unfamiliar with the concept of being companion animals.

On June 28, 2008, dog racing came to an end in Colorado. Although it was not banned, it was deemed to be economically unfeasible. As recently as eleven years ago, there were five dog tracks operating in Colorado.

The last remaining track closed rather suddenly last June, three months before the season was scheduled to end. While some of these dogs still qualified to race in Florida, Tucson or Phoenix, there were 200 greyhounds in Colorado that suddenly needed new homes.

CGA and five other greyhound adoption groups in the state at the time got together and moved all 200 dogs into foster care. CGA took in 78 of the dogs. Veterinarian Heather Weir at Almost Home for Hounds took in a number of the dogs, neutered and otherwise medically cared for them and transported them to various adoption groups out of state. CGA and the other four adoption groups each quickly raised money and made their own arrangements for veterinary care, transportation and foster homes in Colorado. It is hard to imagine just how quickly hundreds of people had to mobilize to transport and foster 200 dogs on short notice.

Since getting their 78 dogs comfortably into foster care and/or adoptive homes,

and with dog racing no longer a viable industry in Colorado, CGA had to find a new way of doing business. Clearly, most future greyhounds would come from out of state.

Several months ago the group began devising a new plan to assist racing greyhounds from other states. CGA now works closely with Halfway Home Greyhound Adoption in Tulsa to find retirement homes for greyhounds that don't have local race track adoption programs available to them. Halfway Home was formed in 2002 by a small group of very passionate volunteers who shared a love of greyhounds and a mutual respect for the racing industry and racing dogs.

As you can probably imagine, not every greyhound that is born in a racing operation will be capable of becoming a racer. Dogs who are injured, slow or do not have the desire necessary to race, as well as retired racers who are converted to breeding stock, are considered "racing school drop-outs."

These dogs along with retired studs and broods were the initial passion of Halfway Home's volunteers.

Over the years, Halfway Home has developed close relationships with breeders, rescue groups and training farms in many states and Canada and works to aid rescues in rehoming these gentle creatures. They spend time to evaluate the temperament of each dog, ensure that they are neutered and up to date on all vaccinations, attend to any other medical needs and then transport them to adoption groups like CGA. The benefit to CGA is that as dogs arrive, they are ready for foster care or adoptive homes and the adoption fees can go to assist the rescue, rather than paying for costly medical care.

Rori Mattson, President of CGA told us that Teddy Palmer of Halfway Home literally calls and says, "Send me your shopping list." A shopping list would outline the number of available fosters and what types of dogs they would be best suited for. "Teddy houses the dogs herself so she knows them before she sends them to us. She works closely with the National Greyhound Association, so when a kennel closes down she is ready to move. Teddy is also very picky about who hauls her dogs," Rori added.

When a load of dogs arrives, all the waiting fosters meet to unload the dogs at a large park. "When the doors open, it's like Christmas. Everyone is so excited and you can hear people saying 'that's my dog!' It is a really big event," said Rori who is also procurement coordinator for CGA. "I used to dial for dogs; now I have someone who calls and asks for our order. Halfway Home is the best put together adoption group I know," she said.

Although they are very fortunate to have found such an amazing partner, there is still a tremendous amount of work to do in Denver once the dogs arrive. They currently have about 99 fosters on their list, but only 35 of those actively foster dogs. That means that an active foster cares for eight to nine dogs per year on

average. That is an awful lot of love to share. Dogs are generally in foster care for 2-8 weeks with 3-4 weeks being average.

"What we need more than anything is more fosters," Rori told us. "That is our bottleneck," she added. The number of available fosters determines how many dogs they can rehome. We provide the food, medicine, hardware and a crate. All we ask the foster to provide is time and attention.

"What is different about fostering greyhounds is that they are adult dogs that have no idea how to be a pet. They don't know how to walk up stairs and you have to make sure they don't walk into a sliding glass door. They walk into your home like they own it. The first few nights can be a bit rough as many of them have just been neutered and they are confused about a great many things," Rori said of the fostering process. What make the process go so smoothly is that they are used to being handled by people, are used to being crated and they want to perform and please. "You get to see them transform from being confident athletes into being very confident pets. Rarely do you get to see dogs go from working athlete to pampered pet. That's the most rewarding thing," Rori added.

People have many misconceptions about greyhounds. For instance, they are very happy in apartments, condos and most types of homes. They don't even require a yard if they get a long walk at least three times a week. They are very sweet, are great with children, and except for an occasional burst of energy, are serious couch potatoes. They are as calm, sweet and gentle a creature as you could desire.

CGA holds a number of charity events each year to fund their efforts. The two biggest events are the annual golf tournament, this year on July 28th, and their annual picnic on September 12th. For more information on how you can volunteer, foster or donate, please visit www.coloradogreyhoundrescue.org.

Adoptables



Jivin Jacobs
3-year-old male



Handy
6-year-old male



Frisky
11-year-old male



Brewster (no cats)
4-year-old male