

OHS Gives Bend Beagle “Second Chance”

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Seven dogs from Bend are among those participating in the “10,000 Second Chances” Program.

How many second chances in life are there? At the Oregon Humane Society, a lucky Beagle from Bend received the society’s 10,000th second chance. Lollipop, a four-year-old Beagle found as a stray and first taken in by a shelter in Bend, will now be looking to OHS for a second chance at finding a home. For Lollipop and thousands of dogs like her, the OHS Second Chance program is a new lease on life.

Lollipop with Troy Kerstetter “Our goal is to get as many dogs adopted as possible, and that means lending a hand to other hard-working shelters when they get overwhelmed,” said Sharon Harmon, OHS executive director.

Lollipop and six other dogs came to OHS from the the Humane Society of Central Oregon in Bend. Animal Welfare Director Troy Kerstetter frequently makes the three-hour drive from Bend to Portland when his shelter “which has one of the highest adoption rates in the country” runs out of room for adoptable dogs.

“When the choice is to euthanize a healthy animal because we have run out of space, I hotfoot it to OHS,” he said. Kerstetter was welcomed with open arms when he arrived in Portland today. “We’ve been able to find a home for every healthy dog we’ve taken in through the Second Chance program,” said OHS Customer Care Manager Sandra Farnsworth, who launched the program in 2000 and has seen its popularity grow and grow.

While visiting shelters around the state, Farnsworth offered OHS’s assistance to shelters that, no matter how hard they worked, could not find space to house adoptable dogs. “I asked these shelters to call us, and said we would find homes for these dogs. If necessary, we’ll send our van to pick them up.” A few shelters came on board at first, then more and more until the OHS Second Chance program now reaches throughout the state. Last year, 1,974 animals came to OHS through the program, hailing from 38 shelters in 12 Oregon counties plus the states of California, Georgia, Louisiana and Washington.

For Bend's Humane Society of Central Oregon, the Second Chance program is a way to cope with the large number of dogs it receives—so many that the shelter's kennels sometimes overflow. "We have an extremely high dog adoption rate, and people are always surprised that a shelter of our size can find homes for over 1,000 dogs each year," said Kerstetter. "We work hard to reunite strays with their owners and I am always looking for ways to find new homes for dogs, which includes taking them to OHS if I need to." One reason OHS is so successful at finding homes for dogs is the community's love of animals. "The Portland area—from elected officials on down—is filled with dog lovers," said OHS's Harmon. A state-of-the-art shelter also makes it easy for people to see and meet dogs, and dozens of OHS outreach events bring animals to every corner of the area.

Both Bend's shelter and OHS have adoption rates far above the national average--Bend adopts 96 percent of its dogs, and Portland has adopted 98 percent so far this year. The national average is estimated at only 25 percent.

"It always brings a smile to my face when I see a van filled with dogs from other shelters arrive," said Harmon. "The drivers are usually unpaid volunteers who have been on the road for hours, and they are the real heroes for the dogs."

OHS Gives Bend Beagle "Second Chance" by Bend Weekly News Sources