

Colleen's Fund Newsletter

April 16, 2001

written by Alexandra Morgan

Welcome to the VERY FIRST ISSUE of colleen's fund newsletter! We have always done stray rescue here at Alexandra Morgan's Animal School but we were never very well organized, had never applied for non-profit status, etc., until now. Colleen O'Neill's gift to me is that I am now (getting!) better organized with all aspects of stray rescue. I want **colleen's fund** to stand as a lasting tribute to her memory, I want it to be a source of pride and pleasure to her family and friends. For those people who receive this newsletter but never had the good fortune to know Colleen, I hope it allows some of her kindness and compassion to enter your lives.

First, some very important **THANKS** : above all to the O'Neill family, who asked that in lieu of funeral bouquets, monetary donations be sent to Animal School for the strays. Because of this, we were able to open an account with a starting balance of \$980 !! Many thanks to all of you who sent us checks in Colleen's memory – we are honored to be the recipients of your generosity.

Thanks also go out to all of my Animal School staff members, who not only are responsible for the daily care of both Daycare Dogs and strays, but who have generously volunteered their time to help out at **colleen's fund** fundraisers. Cindy Holyoke, Kimberly O'Grady, Gabe Hesse and above all Sara Norberg have been there when they were needed, and I am enormously grateful!

Many thanks as well to the good people of the other rescue groups we work with: Mary Grossman of Northwest Animal Protection League and Brenda Hogan of the East Providence Volunteer Services for Animals have always been extremely helpful in every possible way. Rescue work can be exhausting and depressing, and there are days when the happy endings seem out-weighted by the endless problems...it is at those times that I especially value the kindness and support of other rescue people.

I also want to thank the Gaouette family of Attleboro, MA, who have just donated a washing machine! They met us at the Pet Expo, read our Wish List, adopted a puppy from us....and gave us their old machine (which isn't even very old!).

Thank You to Kate Fraser (and "Isaac" the Pit Bull) for putting our Pit Bulls up on the Pit Bull Rescue Central website. Her generous donation of time and effort had immediate results – our 5 month old Pit Bull "Ramona" was adopted ! That brings me to saying Thank You to Sue Gauthier of P.B.R.C., who saw Ramona's photo, got in touch with a family she knew in Texas, and then drove Ramona to the airport (on Easter!) to catch her flight! Happy Trails to Ramona, and many thanks to both Kate and Sue. "Jade" and "Romeo" are still listed on the site; hopefully they will get good homes soon, too.

FUNDRAISERS

We have already had two fundraisers for **colleen's fund**. The first was on March 3, a Birthday Party for Small Dogs Only. My Pom-illion (that's Pomeranian-Papillion!) Mooshie turned one year old, and we held a fundraiser to celebrate. We had a wonderful time, and raised over \$300 plus stacks of bedding for the animals. Thank You to everyone who attended (as well as to those who couldn't come but sent a donation anyway!). We asked you to bring old blankets and towels –and WOW! We got plenty! I think all the little guests had lots of fun, playing food hunting games, doing the obstacle course, and parading in their costumes. By the time we got to the homemade liver flavored cake with the liver-tuna flavored frozen yogurt, many of them were almost too full of goodies to finish it! We're planning a summer party for Akeba's sixth birthday – bigger dogs only!

Our second fundraiser came just days later, March 10-11, at the R.I. Pet Expo. We had a booth and handed out educational materials, had several raffles (THANK YOU to the people at Rumford Pet Center who donated some Good Stuff!) and introduced people to several of the dogs and cats we had up for adoption. We took applications, and successfully concluded four adoptions in the following days. We raised almost \$500, so we were pretty pleased. Look for us there again next March...

HAPPY ENDINGS

In addition to Ramona, and two little puppies, we have also recently placed three beautiful adult cats into loving homes. "Mocha", "Keiko" and "Bobcat" are all reported to be happy and adjusting well. Mocha was only with us briefly before she was adopted, but Bobcat and Keiko had both been with us for several months. We had them spayed, vaccinated and tested for Feline Leukemia/Aids. We are delighted to tell you that "Dawson" is finally settled into his very own new family. Many of you remember Dawson, the HUGE Malamute-Shepherd-Lab mix who first came to us two years ago at the age of 18 months. His original owner was unable to keep him and surrendered him to us. He had no manners, and although very sweet was also very wild. We housetrained him, crate trained him to prevent chewing, taught him to walk without pulling in a Gentle Leader, taught him "sit", "down", "stay", "wait", "crate". He went to a new home a year ago February, with a wonderful family who adored him. Their young daughter, who was fearful of dogs, told me, "Now I never will be afraid of dogs again because I have the biggest dog in the world!". For months my check-up phone calls reported a happy family and then, last fall, the girl developed an allergy to dog fur. They were crying when they brought Dawson back to us, but we promised to take good care of him until the right home could be found. His new owners have two other dogs; one is quite elderly, and the other is painfully shy and afraid of the world. Despite training, he remained too nervous until Dawson entered his life. His owner says, "Dawson has healed Raffi. It is wonderful and amazing to watch them together."

Another happy ending came for "Jethro", the large Brittany Spaniel who was with us for two months during the winter. Jethro came in from a shelter where he was on the kill list because he was supposedly ten years old, had heartworm and was not neutered. His former owner said she had rescued him from being a junk-yard dog for five years, kept him (but never took him to the vet!) for another five years and then surrendered him to the shelter because he kept escaping from her backyard and she was tired of paying the fines to get him out... In fact, Jethro was no more than 4 or 5 years old. He was so large that it took me a little while to realize he was a Brittany. When it finally clicked in my head, I called Brittany Breed Rescue, and they were incredible. They promptly put together a phone network that resulted within days in a foster home where he went to undergo his heartworm treatment. Last week I received a call from Susan Anderson, of R.I. Brittany Rescue, telling me that the treatment went fine, and he had just been placed in a new home of his very own, with an older couple who think he is great. We thought so, too! Thanks to all the Brittany people, who were efficient, helpful and a pleasure to work with.

"Tyler" the Cockapoo puppy also got a terrific home recently. Tyler's owners surrendered him to us when he was just 10 weeks old, because his irritable dominant aggression was more than they felt they could cope with. He was a handful! Tyler bit me 12 times in the first two days I worked with him; luckily it was only with his little puppy teeth, but even so I have some scars! After 3 weeks of intensive work, he had improved dramatically, but I didn't rehome him until he was 6 months old, because every time he would grow up a little bit, that aggression would resurface. When I finally felt confident that he would no longer revert, I put him up for adoption and quickly found him a terrific home in Connecticut. I am delighted that things ended up well for Tyler, but I do wish his breeder had given more thought to the consequences of breeding dogs with unfit temperaments. A great deal of unhappiness could have been avoided for his first owner...

And now we come to a sad ending, but one filled with love. It is with great sorrow that I tell you that the entire staff of Animal School agreed to put "Coco Chanel", the brown Pit Bull, to sleep. Coco

originally came in to the East Providence Animal Shelter almost a year ago. She was in terrible condition, starved, raw and bloody from severe mange, and so frightened of people that she lay curled in a ball, growling, and would not even get up to relieve herself. I was asked to evaluate her, and found her to be completely non-aggressive. When I put a leash on her, she got up and walked out of the cage with me. She was treated for mange, spayed (she showed evidence of having produced many, many litters of puppies) and vaccinated. She came to stay with us last summer. Because she was afraid of people she didn't know, and would growl and bark at them, she was not an easy dog to place. With anyone she got to know, however, she was wonderful. She was sweet, cuddly, playful and gentle. And then the mange, which we had thought was almost cured, came back. Despite all our efforts, and endless trips to the vet, she got worse. She developed a bizarre skin infection, which caused her to be covered in bloody boils. The eruptions between her toes became so painful that she did not even want to walk. Despite this, Coco never once growled, never once tried to stop us from doing the necessary but extremely painful cleaning and medicating of the open sores. We took her to a specialist, who confirmed that dogs who suffer from this particular combination of mange and impaired immune system can never really recover. They improve, you begin to hope for recovery, and then they crash again. We tried for another week, but Coco seemed to have lost interest in life. She was still eating and so we fed her steak and hotdogs and liver treats every day, and we hugged her and kissed her and we cried a lot when we were away from her, so we wouldn't worry her. Then, on a beautiful spring morning, she was gently put to sleep. Held in the arms of someone who loved her, with a mouthful of her favorite liver treat, she slipped away before the syringe was even empty. Her courage and gentleness in the face of the abuses and neglect that had been heaped upon her amazed and touched us all. The decision to end her suffering was a terribly hard choice to be forced to make, but the entire staff was in agreement. She loved us, we loved her and we will never forget her. Sleep well, Coco ma belle Chanel.

A NEW BEGINNING

And now, a Special Announcement ! For over twenty years, I have nurtured the idea of creating a new breed of dog. Because of my deep reluctance to bring more dogs into a world that already has too many dogs (and therefore treats many of them as waste items...) I have never yet tried to make my idea a reality. However, I have decided that the time is right for several reasons, and so I take great pleasure in introducing to you: **The Colleen Dog !!**

I hope you have enjoyed this first issue of our newsletter. I intend to send the next one around October. Please keep our wish list (in the yellow **colleen's fund** brochure) in mind (minus the washing machine!). We can always use old bedding, and MONEY! Our vet bill in 2000 was over \$5000, even with the discounts the vets give us. Our address is **colleen's fund**, c/o Brickyard Farm, 21 Willard Ave, Rehoboth MA, 02769. (508) 336-4854

I wish you all a wonderful summer!
Alexandra Morgan