**Jake’s Transformation**

A few months ago, Jake was bald, wrinkly, homeless, and a 45-pound bag of bones. His owners had left him at a shelter because he lost his hair, which, they said, had been a problem since he was 6 months—about the time he had been treated twice for fleas, probably with strong pesticides.

At 2½ years, Jake’s prospects looked grim until a L.E.A.R.N. volunteer rescued him from the shelter. A day later he was brought to his foster home. He didn’t know how to be a dog; guarded toys, food and water; and seemed stressed and depressed. People who saw him assumed he was diseased or mange-ridden and would shy away from him.

His foster parents, Dawn and Dan, saw a different dog, however; one with incredible potential to be happy, healthy, loving—and very handsome. Dawn and Dan have fostered a number of Labs who came to L.E.A.R.N. with challenges that have included food allergies, pneumonia, and ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) tears in need of replacement. Through research and experience, they understand the important role nutrition plays in returning a dog to health and maintaining his or her vitality. Jake’s Karma brought him to a perfect foster home.

Jake after 3 weeks of foster

Even better, Jake has the benefit of foster sister Boo, invaluable to helping foster dogs recover and L.E.A.R.N. how to be happy. For example, when a previous foster with pneumonia needed help with a coughing fit in the middle of the night, Boo jumped up on Dawn while she was asleep to tell her to come and help. Any time a foster dog has needed something—from health assistance to a trip outside, Boo has ensured that Dawn knew.

Not surprisingly, Boo has played an integral role in helping Jake learn to be a dog. Boo easily tolerated his initial “crabbiness” and pressing need to guard toys, water, and food. Boo, with her very motherly...
qualities and instant forgiveness of ill manners, taught Jake about being a well-behaved pack member. She helped him learn to be more secure; as his stress level ebbed, he became happy.

The photos highlight Jake’s physical transformation—from 3 to 8 weeks after arriving at his foster home. He was initially bald halfway down his sides and his head was mostly bald. He didn’t look much like a Lab. Jake’s hair has been growing back in patches. Currently, he is only bald behind each ear. The volunteer who had kept Jake overnight before bringing him to Dawn and Dan’s for fostering didn’t even recognize Jake when he arrived at a recent L.E.A.R.N. event! In a remarkably short time, Jake has gained lots of fur and a healthy 15 pounds.

Jake’s progress has been much more than growing hair, however. For his first weeks in foster, he never wagged his tail. After exactly 5 weeks, Dan, who works at home and is with the dogs all day, noticed that Jake’s tail had started to do something. It moved slowly and after a while, wagged. Now Jake carries his tail out or up instead of down, almost between his legs. When someone talks to him, his ears now perk up, he engages with the person, and his tail naturally wags. The same day his tail started moving, Jake gave his first “woof.” It’s been his only one so far, but that may be because he’s a very mellow guy in the house.

While food allergies seem the major contributing factor for Jake’s hair loss, it might not be 100% of the explanation. With his better diet—food with real ingredients free from indigestible fillers and artificial additives—he’s been completely off high dosages of prednisone for 5 weeks and is doing fine. (Dawn has done considerable research to help her fosters, especially Jake, and has been learning about Chinese theories of herbs and related topics.) It could be possible that Jake has an auto-immune condition as his eyes don’t produce enough tears; this means he gets drops once daily. It’s also possible that he suffered pesticide poisoning from his early flea treatments and his body has been detoxifying. Recently, Jake experienced some sores on his feet which might fit with a “detox” theory. Despite a few road bumps, he keeps getting better.

Jake also seemed to suffer from considerable stress initially, always a contributor to health problems. Having consistency in his routine and being treated like one of the pack has given him security and confidence.

Good nutrition, fish oil and some other supplements—and the happy, consistent, loving and stable foster home Dawn, Dan and Boo have provided—have helped Jake become healthier and happier. He’s very affectionate, loves to cuddle, is great around kids and has excellent recall. Outside, he’s always eager to retrieve and go for walks. If you might be that pack leader and home for Jake, with a bit more progress, he’ll be ready to meet you soon.

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**Pawsitively Delicious Recipes cookbook!**

Help support L.E.A.R.N.’s cookbook fundraiser. The recipes are great. Plus the cookbook includes Lab pictures. So get ready to order your. We expect them back from the printer in September. Watch L.E.A.R.N.’s website for purchasing details. This cookbook will make a great gift and help save Labs in the process. 😊
WANT TO HELP SAVE MORE LABS?

L.E.A.R.N. needs foster homes to save more Labs! There are more Labs who need help than Rescues and Shelters can save. You can make a real difference! Consider being part of the solution. Consider opening your home and your heart to a foster dog. Even fostering just once helps. It will mean a lot to the dog whose life you save!

L.E.A.R.N. also needs VOLUNTEERS for home visits, transportation, fund raising, and more. Please join us!
Please visit L.E.A.R.N.’s website for more info and an application: http://www.labadoption.org/how-you-can-help or contact Chris Wallen at chris4Labs@gmail.com or call (847) 289-PETS (7387) and leave Chris a message. Thanks for considering it. ☺

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Pet Food Labels: Is your pet thriving or merely surviving?

By Dorothy Vetrovec

The old mantra you are what you eat holds true for our beloved pets. Sure we can survive on pizza, burgers and ice cream just as your pet can survive on the same old grocery kibble, but do you just want your pet to merely survive or would you like your pet to thrive and live a long and healthy life. It starts with knowing a little something about what is in your pet’s food.

Many large pet food companies do a great job at marketing and advertising their pet food. From the colorful vegetables and meats splashed all over the packaging to the cute commercials of our pets, these companies know a lot about marketing and little about pet nutrition. Several million dollars are spent each year on pet food advertising, but what large pet food companies don’t tell you is what’s REALLY in the product.

Let’s take a look at some of the ingredients that you will find among the pet foods you find at the grocery store and big box stores. These are ingredients that you DO NOT want in your pet food.

Corn and corn gluten meal are typically used in grocery store pet foods as it is an inexpensive way to add protein to the food. Corn is not digestible by people let alone your pets and it does not provide any appropriate nutritional value. Corn gluten meal has been used in many weed killers and is merely sugar. Both corn and corn gluten are often what causes allergies and health issues in animals and should not be used as a protein source for pet food. The protein in your pet food should come from meat.

You’ll also find by-products and by-product meals. These by-products are the leftovers not acceptable for human consumption. By products are a cheap way to add some animal flavor and protein to the food and can include the undeveloped eggs of chickens.

It only gets worse when the pet food contains animal fat. Animal fat can include rendered fat from dead, diseased, disabled and dying animals. Often these animals are the ones euthanized at shelters and zoos. Animal fat can also come from outdated supermarket meat and rancid restaurant fat.

All these foods will also contain artificial coloring. Do you think Fido cares that the kibble is red, yellow and brown? No, it is colored for the consumer; leading the consumer to conclude that a colorful diet is healthy for them so it is healthy for their pet. WRONG!

So can your pet survive on all this junk? Sure they can, and they have for many, many years. But I ask you again do you want your pet to merely survive or do you want your pet to thrive and be a vibrant, healthy and happy pet living a long full life?

You can see why so many pets have health issues today. You are what you eat, and so is your pet. When you feed your pet a good quality diet, they eat less, and you save money on vet bills. There are many affordable good quality pet foods out there; you just have to step outside the box, the big box that is.

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L.E.A.R.N. is now on Facebook! Please Visit Us There!
The Gift of Seniors  by Mitzi Heytow

2004: From left: Sam, Buddy, Mitzi (mom), Ms. Bessy, Remi, Ryley; Maggie (L.E.A.R.N. volunteer), and Raider

About 15 years ago I decided to dedicate my life to taking in “unadoptable” Labradors—old, sick, and abused and, unexpectedly, as a result, my life has been enriched and joyous.

Unfortunately, I only have the wonderful dogs a very short time; and in fact, over the past 2 years I have lost and grieved over 14 or more dogs. All are very special; but some are “special-er.”

Mr. Sunny—and we always called him “Mister”—looked like a beached whale; The Dugg (Dugan) only went out if he had a hot dog under his nose to lure him out the door; Stampee or The Stamper—no one thought he would live to see another day, but his indomitable spirit gave him 1 ½ glorious years of extra time; Remi, chained in a garage, her bones disintegrated from atrophy of the jaw and her skull collapsed. I didn’t know how I’d survive without her. And there was Bentley, locked in a basement after he became fat—too sick and too obese to get up the the stairs when L.E.A.R.N. rescued him. He had hepatitis, pancreatitis, and a perforated ulcer. But, he survived a major operation and lived 1 ½ years longer.

Bentley's famous smile

Now once again I have an entirely new group, who again bring me joy and a raison d’etre [reason for being], and in my heart I know they are all together at Rainbow Bridge and one future day they’ll stop and look around and run as fast as they can because I, too, will be there.

Our Labs Need Your Help!

Many dogs desperately need our help, including expensive medical care that drains our funds. Donations are tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. L.E.A.R.N. and their Labs thank you!

I want to support the efforts of L.E.A.R.N. to rescue Labs and place them in permanent adoptive homes.

Name: ___________________________________________Address________________________________________

For donations of $50+, you may receive our printed newsletter. If you’d like to stretch your donation further by receiving our Newsletter by email, please include your email address here: ____________________________

Please find my check for: ___$25.00 ___$50.00 ____$100.00 ___Other Amount $________

Please mail to L.E.A.R.N., PO Box 164, Island Lake, IL 60042 or donate at www.Labadoption.org via PayPal.
Great Teams: Volunteers and their Dogs (Part 2 of 2)

Part 2 is here! L.E.A.R.N. volunteers work hard to save Labs—from fostering, home visits, community outreach events, transports, and much more—and many are dedicated team members with their own dogs. The range of activities volunteers engage in is as diverse as the volunteers themselves, but the common theme is that each loves dogs. Many comprise therapy teams who visit hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living facilities and bring great cheer to patients, residents and staff alike. Other volunteers and their dogs compete in conformation, agility, and hunt tests. Some dogs also help children master their reading skills.

The photo to the left is Ginger, whom L.E.A.R.N. volunteer Robin Huttar rescued in May of 2008. Ginger is in training to become a therapy dog at Edward Hospital in Naperville, IL. Ginger is Robin’s “absolute pride and joy,” In-between training sessions she enjoys sunning herself by the window.

Congratultions to Gunner who, together with his human Joni, just earned his Canine Good Citizen (CGC) and became certified by American Therapy International. Gunner’s ID card recently arrived in the mail, and his first nursing home visit is coming right up. Unfortunately, his “brother” Koda is depressed, but he is being reminded he’s loved just the same and told maybe he’ll be a therapy dog in his next lifetime.

Deb Hamele and her dogs span the range of canine competitions, including conformation, agility and hunt tests. Showing your dog in the breed ring, also known as “conformation,” is a way to evaluate them against the standard for the breed. A dog must accumulate 15 points to earn their AKC Championship title. A dog must earn two "majors" which are 3 to 5 points each. This is not easy to do as they must beat every dog competing of their gender at multiple shows. Agility is a fun, timed event where dogs race through an obstacle course. Any breed or mixed breed can compete, and Labradors often excel at this event.

Labradors are known to love water and many are great hunting companions. Labradors are eligible to compete in "Hunt Tests" that are held by organizations such as the American Kennel Club and the United Kennel Club. The purpose of an AKC Hunt Test for Retrievers is to test the merits of and evaluate the abilities of Retrievers in the field in order to determine their suitability and ability as hunting companions. A Hunt test is different from a field trial -- at a field trial only one dog can win points that day towards their field trial championship. At a hunt test all dogs passing are awarded a "leg" towards a title. Levels that dogs compete at are junior, senior and masters.

Jazz competing at the 2009 National

Cori competing in Agility

Summer retrieves a bird at a hunt test
GREAT TEAMS, continued

Kathy Butcher and yellow Lab Midas participate in Rally Obedience Trials and Events. Midas has his Rally Level 1 Title and is working on his Level 2 Title. In addition Midas loves to track. He has been trained to find lost people/animals, and it is one of his favorite things to do. Midas is also on a Canine Drill Team that does obedience performances around the community. The team hopes to enter competitions soon. For recreation Midas loves to run in the woods, swim and go rollerblading.

Midas

Kathy’s Black Lab Emma, a L.E.A.R.N. alum, is a therapy dog with TDI. Emma, one of the sweetest dogs ever, loves to visit nursing homes and hospitals. Noises sometimes scare Emma, but when she’s visiting a hospital or nursing home and there are loud noises, she completely ignores them and continues on with her visits. Bringing wags and licks to people is Emma’s calling in life. Emma also visits local schools to help educate children on the proper way to meet a dog and what you can do with a dog.

Emma

Joanne Boettin used to do therapy work with her partner Flash: “Flash was a real ball nut, and I can remember when I used to go to the nursing home with her, and she would see the tennis balls on the residents walkers and want to fetch them.” Flash passed her CGC in 1999, and the team then joined TDI. They traveled to different nursing homes and visited with the residents. “I can't believe how many residents waited patiently every Saturday to see Flash. Just the gleam in the residents’ eyes made it all worth while. They would tell me about the dogs they had in their lives and how much they missed not being able to have a dog at the nursing home. Flash loved everyone she met.”

Flash’s human dad, Bill, had a debilitating stroke and had to go into a nursing home. He loved to see Flash and Lilly (their other dog) when they came to visit. The dogs didn't go with Joanne every time she went to see Bill, “but when they did come, his eyes would light up and you could just see the change in him.” Joanne adds, “Although Flash was not a Rescue dog, it was because of her that I got started in Rescue. I realized after I adopted her back in 1996 that there was a huge need for dogs who needed to be rescued. I was fairly new with the computer but was able to surf the Internet and find different Rescue organizations. I was retired at the time so I had time to commit to volunteering. Together with a few other volunteers, we started L.E.A.R.N.” Flash transitioned to Rainbow Bridge last year, which makes it an ever happier place.
Sylvia Sorgel and her husband adopted Satch from L.E.A.R.N. 9 years ago, and for the last 5 years, he’s been a Certified Therapy Dog through Rainbow Animal Assisted Therapy (www.rainbowaat.org). Satch works with children at Misericordia, a home for mentally and often physically challenged children. Sylvia finds it a great experience to see the change in the children as they relate to the dogs and in some cases, L.E.A.R.N. to give the dogs commands. Satch is unbelievably patient with them and even allows one little boy to walk behind him and hold onto his tail! As an example of the progress the children can make, one little girl, mentally and physically challenged and confined to a wheelchair, did not interact at all at the start of the program; now she can give Satch multiple commands – “sit, down, stay, come” and each time she does and he responds, she gives Sylvia a big smile and “high 5.”

Children at Misericordia L.E.A.R.N. to interact with and give commands to Satch

Enormous Thanks!
The following people generously donated money, supplies, or services to help our rescued Labs. Your help means these Labs are alive and happy. L.E.A.R.N. especially appreciates your generosity in these challenging economic times! An “*” signifies a donation through our Internet fundraiser. Please see page 10 for details.

Mike & Jen Bachmann*
Badger State Hunting Retriever Club
Brian Benko, In memory of Alan Mittelstaedt & Jenny, his yellow Lab
Julie & Eric Bills
Amy Corbisier
Chet & Susan Cusick, Honoring Lauryn’s 5th & Caroline’s 1st birthdays
Thomas DeKarske
Carole Demske
Carole Dickerson
DogDom Int'l Dog Training*
Mary Domes*
Janice Ellis
Gail Garza*
Mary Goltz, In memory of Sammy;*
Julie Grosso
John Hanrahan
Andrew Heistad
Kelly Huerta*
Jennifer Johnson
Mike & Pam Kalinosky*
Carol Kalnow*
Craig Kemphome
Sheryl & Greg Lindmark*
Cheryl McCabe & Carl Gergits* In memory of Sumo, Maxie & Buster
Christine McNulty
Janet Mittelstaedt
Andrea Moen
Nature’s Feed Inc.
Tim & Diane Newman
Katherine Nitz
Page’s Healthy Paws
Jeanne Schuett
Carrie & Mike Schwab* In memory of Luke
Chris Sertzel*
Jeff Skaife* In memory of King
Donna Steiner
Nancy Story
Steve & Diane Streck*
Mark Swenson
Lisa Torrey*
US Bones rewards program
Reghan Walsh & Bruce Bulendorf, In honor of Rosco
Sarah Will
Chuck Wernick
Ms. Pamela L. Wonsettler
Sheryl Yuill
A Moment for Seniors

Senior and almost-senior Labs are too often seen as disposable. People give up on them in ways that they would never give up on humans. One look in their eyes shows you the wisdom they’ve honed during their lives; it should be considered a privilege for anyone to learn from such a dog. We can only hope that we’ll be treated and valued during our golden years and not suffer the trauma of abandonment that many senior dogs experience. If you or someone you know would like to enrich your lives with one of these dear souls, please contact L.E.A.R.N.!

Jack’s time at the shelter was nearly up when a volunteer asked L.E.A.R.N. to help. Jack had captured the heart of this shelter volunteer, and that saved his life. He’d been a stray, had a Mast Tumor plus heartworms, and needed treatment. Now his tumor is gone, heartworm treatment is complete, and Jack has zest for life! He loves his daily walks--and some jogs with his foster mom. He recently and very proudly captured (safely) a baby opossum. He is also a very good boy. Jack seeks an especially wonderful forever home and promises to capture more hearts.

KoKo is as sweet as they come. The victim of divorce, KoKo, age 11, was left behind and found in a house that was being cleaned in order to sell. KoKo doesn’t remember when she last had a proper walk; now she enjoys a few miles each day. She looks and moves like a much younger dog. She loves her little human foster brother dearly, and he gives her plentiful hugs. KoKo would love to keep you company at home and on walks and mostly would like a best friend to love.

Despite experiences ranging from abandonment to shelters, these senior dogs—Jack and KoKo included—continue to have faith in the potential goodness of humans and the ability to give unconditional love.

Congrats to Labbies who found their new families!

Prior to February 2010
Grace—Tonya Manka

February
Kayla—Robert & Barbara Nitschneider
Charley—Dan & Kristine Paprocki
Keaton—Peter Balis
Charlie—Thomas & Debbie Leffler

March
Taffy—Cynthia Stephanz
Kobe—John & Eileen Olsen
Abby—Paul & Linda Nelson

April
Willy—Jeremy & Debra Monigold
Faith—Nancy Burton
Coco—Wendy & Bill Edgington
Shadow—Sarah Helland

May
Jenna—Bonnie VanEpps
Simon—Catherine Excell
Lola—Tim & Nancy Hudson
Drake—Jon Stefaniak
Loki—Lisa Giovannelli & Kevin Price

Is your contact info current? If you’ve adopted a dog from L.E.A.R.N. and have changed your address, phone or email address please visit our contact page to let us know.
Artificial Sweetener Xylitol Deadly for Dogs

L.E.A.R.N. foster Iris recently ate a pack of Trident gum that could have killed her. Lucky for Iris, she ate the gum in the car outside the Vet’s office—where her foster mom Chris was taking her to be checked for kennel cough. Iris did not have the gum in her system long enough to do any damage to her liver. (The gum had been in a trusted spot where no previous dog had found it.)

Xylitol, an artificial sweetener found in many products including chewing gum, if consumed by a dog, can cause a sudden drop in blood sugar as quickly as 30 minutes after ingestion . . . or, the blood sugar drop can take as long as 12 hours. Symptoms of hypoglycemia include stumbling, loss of coordination, weakness, vomiting, seizures and coma. Xylitol poisoning can also lead to liver failure or blood clotting problems.

Some chewing gums can be as much as 70% xylitol. The ASPCA has reported xylitol poisoning from cookies, muffins, and cupcakes. Sports gels used by endurance athletes often contain xylitol. Xylitol is also found in pharmaceuticals and many dental products.

Thus, please make sure only to use pet toothpaste, not human toothpaste, when brushing your dog’s teeth.

If you suspect that your dog has ingested xylitol, contact your Veterinarian or Emergency Clinic immediately. There is know way of being sure exactly how much xylitol is in a certain brand of gum or other xylitol-sweetened product. Thus, treat any suspected or known ingestion of xylitol with extreme urgency because it can be life-threatening.

Keep any products containing xylitol inaccessible to your dog(s). Secure a place to store xylitol-containing chewing gum and any other products containing xylitol.

If you are not sure what has been used to sweeten a product, please keep it out of access to your dog.

Sources:
http://avetsguidetolife.blogspot.com/2009/03/death-by-chewing-gum.html,
http://www.petpeoplesplace.com/resources/advice/dogs/385-how-harmful-chewing-gum-to-dogs.htm,
http://vetmedicine.about.com/od/toxicology/qt/xylitol_tox.htm

1. Does your dog love to swim? Watch out for the blue-green algae blooms. It’s toxic. Some dogs becoming very sick, others have died after swimming in water with blue-green algae.

2. Want a companion for those trips around town? Wait until the weather is cooler. Never leave your dog in an unattended vehicle on even a warm day. Even with windows open, a parked car can quickly become a furnace and cause heat stroke or death in a dog.

3. Timing your dog’s exercise: Be sure to give your dog adequate time after a meal before exercising him/her. Vigorous exercise too soon after a meal can cause dogs to get Bloat (aka twisted stomach) which is usually fatal for canines. In hot, humid weather, early morning or evening walks are best. Remember your dog can suffer from heat exhaustion or worse, heatstroke, too. They depend on your good judgment.

4. Considering sunscreen or insect repellant for your buddy? Avoid using sunscreens or insect repellants not labeled specifically for use on animals. Some ingredients, like DEET, can cause problems.

5. Is your dog anxious? Is your dog afraid of thunderstorms? If so, he or she may benefit from a body wrap or anxiety wrap. A body wrap looks a lot like a dog coat. Some body wraps are designed to use acupressure points to help calm the dog. Others are designed specifically to counter the static discharge from approaching thunderstorms. Dogs can sense thunderstorms long before people. If you use a wrap for thunderstorm anxiety, be sure to put it on before or just as soon as your dog becomes agitated rather than waiting until the storm is upon you.

Be careful not to inadvertently reinforce your dog’s anxious behavior by positively rewarding them. Likewise, don’t punish them. Remain calm and try to appear confident and happy. You can finde more information about body wraps and other ways to help relieve your dog’s anxiety at:
http://anxietywrap.com.au/thunder.html and on L.E.A.R.N.’s website under Education; Reference Documents:
http://www.labadoption.org/education/reference-documents
Mr. Ed Loves swimming at Pawgust Fest and won’t leave the pool if a tennis ball is anywhere in sight. Bring your dog and experience the fun! Thanks to our volunteers and event sponsors for making this event possible.

All well socialized dogs, current on vaccines, are welcome.

Admission: $10 / Person; 12 & Under are Free

Internet Fundraising Helps Save Two Labs

Thanks to the creativity of Bella’s foster mom, L.E.A.R.N. began two Internet fundraisers this Spring. The first was for Bella, a young yellow Lab who needed two ACL (anterior crutiate ligament) replacements. Bella has had her first surgery and her second is to happen yet this summer. Raising funds continues at http://www.firstgiving.com/lisagemson and please consider helping Bella! Cozmo also has benefited from Internet fundraising thanks to his foster mom. In the Fall issue of The Retriever, please look for more names of those who contributed to Cozmo. We also give enormous thanks to those who gave to Bella’s cause but did not leave a first and last name that enabled us to include them in “Enormous Thanks” on page 7.

L.E.A.R.N. plans to use more approaches to raise funds through the Internet, so please watch for news!

2011 L.E.A.R.N. Calendars

The 2011 Calendars are ready and better than ever! Calendars will be available at upcoming L.E.A.R.N. events including Pawgust Fest and at Mad City Dog Training in Madison, WI. Please watch our website for more ordering information. Calendars cost $12 plus $3 for mailing. Supplies are limited, so don’t wait too long to get yours or others for gifts!