



# The Retriever

Labrador Education And Rescue Network's Newsletter

Volume 9, Number 3, November 2008

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*LEARN's mission is to assist in the rescue of unwanted Labrador Retrievers by placing them in homes through fostering, adoption and referral. In addition, we strive to provide public education regarding Labrador Retrievers and to promote responsible ownership and the humane treatment of all dogs.*

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## *Selfless Love for Duke* Adapted from Emily & Damon Steinke's story



Once in a blue moon a dog's humans experience unanticipated challenges and rise to a level of commitment that exceeds what many devoted and doting dog families can only begin to imagine. The story of Duke, his humans, and his opportunity is extraordinary, epitomizing selfless love and pure commitment.

Duke's previous owners left him with a friend while they divorced and moved. After a few months, it became clear that no one would return for him. Duke, a 4 year-old yellow Lab, came to LEARN in October 2007.

When Duke greeted Emily and Damon, potential adopters, at his foster home, they knew he was their perfect fit. They loved his excitement over a leash and his proud prancing with leash in mouth. They loved how he interacted with his young human foster sister. They knew they could help him with his diagnosed Empty Stomach Syndrome which meant he would often get sick after eating and needed more frequent, smaller meals during the day.

Emily and Damon adopted Duke in November 2007 and "spoiled him with dog beds in our bedroom and living room, more toys and treats than he needed, booties for

the snow (he didn't like to get the snow between his toes), and lots of love." Shortly after they took Duke home, Duke began gagging or choking and having difficulty breathing an hour after eating. The gagging and choking worsened, and Duke's big brown eyes pleaded for help.

Emily and Damon took him to the Vet. An initial exam showed nothing wrong. An x-ray, however, revealed something that shocked the Vet: Duke's esophagus resembled a stomach, not a tube! The esophagus stretched to hold ingested food and water that was not moving to the stomach. Worse, the esophagus had pushed his trachea to the side, likely explaining his breathing challenges. The Vet described Duke's condition as MegaEsophagus (ME). Most Vets never see a case of ME, especially to Duke's extent, because it is extremely rare and because most dogs with ME do not survive puppyhood. Further, because Duke ate and became sick so often, he was at high risk for Aspiration Pneumonia (AP) should he inhale his food.

Unfortunately, ME has no cure, but, if an underlying cause could be identified and fixed, the ME might be reduced or eliminated. If idiopathic (no underlying reason or cause could be identified), then helping the symptoms was the only option. The esophagus, even in humans, cannot be operated on. Emily and Damon hoped Duke's blood work would indicate a problem so that they would have something to identify and fix for him. Unfortunately his test results confirmed that Duke's ME was Idiopathic; his long-term health and longevity prognosis was grim, but Emily emphasized, "We were determined to make his life comfortable, happy and normal for as long as possible."

Since Duke's condition was extremely rare, Emily and Damon obtained a second opinion. Dr. Wirth at the Veterinary Emergency Service in Middleton, WI, said that he had never seen a case of ME this bad and could not believe that Duke had lived over four years. He agreed with the first Vet's diagnosis and warned Emily and Damon that once an animal gets AP, they usually have 6 months to a year to live. He prescribed the first of several medications that Duke would take to try to strengthen the flap that keeps food from returning up the esophagus; he also prescribed antacids to help Duke's stomach keep as much food as possible down.

Emily and Damon researched ME online. They learned to elevate Duke so that gravity would help his food flow straight into his stomach and to either avoid hard and crunchy food or soften it in water first so that it slides to the stomach more easily. Mostly, they felt alone with Duke's condition because websites speak of no hope. However, discovery of a Yahoo ME group returned their hope; dozens of the group's members had dogs living years after their diagnoses.

Duke loved putting his paws on the counter to eat standing up, with extra help from gravity, and his food was made into a mush that he could slurp. After a few months, Duke's regime seemed to get the food down, but he continued to get sick daily and had begun to lose weight. He could no longer reach the counter top, so he stood on pulled-out drawers. Soon that, and hopping on the couch, became too difficult. The Vet checked him for pneumonia; his medications were adjusted and augmented; and his food and its prep were changed. Nothing helped.

In April, Emily and Damon contacted a Yahoo group member about making a "Bailey Chair," which puts a dog in a begging position; this allows a dog to eat and then remain in position for another 20 minutes to allow gravity to move the food to the stomach. They ordered the Bailey Chair DVD but found the demonstration of a feeding tube too extreme and blocked it from their minds. When Emily and Damon realized how much weight and padding Duke had lost, they knew he would be uncomfortable for more than a minute in the Bailey Chair. This became another sign that they were slowly losing the battle against ME.

Soon Duke could no longer climb stairs or get in the car unassisted. Emily explained, "At 4 years, he seemed a 14 year-old. He looked at us again with his big brown eyes and asked for help. Our research led to the conclusion that this [feeding tube] would be the only

way for Duke to survive. Imagine eating, getting sick daily, and remaining hungry; it had to be horrible and we did not want him to suffer longer. The DVD demonstration showed an actual feeding; now it looked manageable. We felt Duke had come to us for a reason, and we wanted to give him a long and happy life. Bypassing the esophagus seemed the best solution. He would still have the risk of aspiration pneumonia, but it would be greatly reduced since most food and water would reach his stomach directly. Plus he would not be constantly sick."



On June 7, 2008, Duke went to Dr. Wirth for the surgery. He required a few days of hydration and nutrition to build strength for surgery. He came home a week later, still skinny, but "his energy level was off the charts! Food worked a miracle for a body and its spirit."

Emily and Damon next faced the challenge of Refeeding Syndrome. Seen in severely malnourished patients (animals and humans), it can result in a rapid fall in phosphate, magnesium and potassium levels thus leading to cardiac overload, in turn causing strokes, accelerated heart rate and even death. Duke needed very small meals every 3-4 hours (even during the night) for 2 weeks, after which feeding amounts could increase and frequency, decrease. Emily and Damon took vacation from work for the 1<sup>st</sup> week Duke was home; the 2<sup>nd</sup> week they were up at night and came home to feed him on an extended lunch before returning to work. "Feedings and medications consumed our lives. Duke was feeling better, and the future looked sunny, so all the effort was well worth it."

A few weeks later Duke received a clean bill of health from Dr. Wirth. He could wear a t-shirt instead of his "E" collar to deter him from messing with his tube. Emily: "He **LOVED** to get dressed and would get upset when you took his shirt off to change it. He also selected his shirts: we held out a few, and he would take

the one he wanted, shake it at us in his mouth and dance around with it until we were able to put it on him.”

Eight weeks passed. Duke gained weight. Then, Emily recounts, “we got up for work one morning only to pull his shirt up so he could go outside and the tube was gone. **GONE!** We panicked. Was it under the couch? No. Was it in his bed? No. It wasn’t anywhere!” The Emergency Clinic gave Duke a temporary tube to keep the hole open. Duke showed no signs of swallowing it.

A week later, they discovered after work one day that the tube was gone again. This time, because of the odd pattern of disappearing tubes, an r-ray was taken: it showed 2 tubes, one in the stomach, one in the esophagus. This meant more surgery . . . which went well. But this time Duke had to wear his “E” collar whenever he was out of sight and when Emily and Damon went to sleep or work. “He hated wearing it and would hang his head and be depressed, but we had no other choice.”

The tube disappeared once again during an unsupervised moment. This time the tube was removed from his esophagus with an endoscope. Dr. Wirth thought that since Duke had gained weight, the tube may have become too short and thus uncomfortable. However when a longer tube was placed in him, Duke managed to swallow it while still at the Vet.

However, even with the “E” collar, Emily and Damon came home from work only to find another tube gone. No one knows how Duke did it. Emily and Damon explained, “We had already talked about this; we knew that it was time to let him go. We had done all that we could but Duke was determined to get his tube out. . . . Duke seemed unhappy each time we put his “E” collar on; his head drooped and he got depressed. . . . He had been under anesthesia so many times that he didn’t perk back up after the last tube placement. . . . He could not

leave the room to wander around without someone telling him to come back. How happy could he really be? We felt that the bad outweighed the good.”

“The hardest part was taking a perfectly happy dog (no tube and thus no “E” collar) to be put to sleep. We considered letting him have one last night with us, but we realized that we were being selfish. . . . He would be hungry in a few hours and how fair was it to keep him here when he was suffering? . . . Through the sobs and uncontrollable tears we took our final moments with Duke. He was wagging his tail and ready to play and had no idea what was about to happen. We didn’t realize how fast he would go, but it was very peaceful. He just drifted off to sleep just like he had so many times before but this time he wouldn’t be waking up.”

While Duke is still sorely missed, Emily and Damon know that, “wherever he is, he’s happily eating a big fat steak while drinking a bowl of water. No more tubes or medications, just being a dog. . . . Most people think we are crazy for spending all the time, effort and money on Duke. But he came to us, or we to him, for a reason. We learned a lot from him and hope that we gave him the happiness that he gave us. Thank you to LEARN for helping us to help Duke and to double this time with us.”

*Sometimes happy endings take strange shapes. Duke’s story is one of love and commitment along with the simple pleasures of paws on the counter, great companionship, and selecting the T-shirt of the day. Emily and Damon had the opportunity to love and be loved by Duke and enjoy his personality. Recently, Emily and Damon added another LEARN foster to their family, Brody, a chocolate Lab who has found an extraordinary forever home. LEARN wishes Duke many delicious meals over the Rainbow Bridge and much happiness to Brody, Emily, and Damon*

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## ***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. LEARN and their Labs thank you!

I want to support the efforts of LEARN as they rescue homeless Labs and Lab mixes 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 **LEARN, PO Box 164, Island Lake, IL 60042** or donate at [www.Labadoption.org](http://www.Labadoption.org) via **PayPal**.



**LEARN Tips**...compiled from questions adopters have asked and the experience of LEARN volunteers.

1. **Ice on the sidewalk/driveway?** Salt can be very irritating to a dog's pads. Avoid using salt to melt your ice. Instead use one of the many ice melting products on the market that are pet-friendly. Also, avoid walking your dog on roadways that have been salted or consider using dog boots.

2. **BEWARE that dog thefts have increased** in recent months. LEARN is aware of a number of cases in the Northern IL and Southeastern WI areas. In one instance, the thieves brought a sick cat to a Vet Clinic to distract the staff while the Clinic's resident dog was stolen. That dog was recovered but others have not been. Thieves often steal dogs to sell to research labs, at flea markets, or for dog fighting bait. We regret to report this, but please keep watch over your pal(s); it's happening in all types of neighborhoods.

3. **Avoid feeding your dog any cooked, smoked or sterilized bones.** Despite their popularity in stores, cooked, smoked, and sterilized bones come with a dangerous risk: the heat in processing causes the bone's structure to become more brittle and thus splinter more easily. Raw bones, contrary to popular belief, may be much safer because they don't splinter. Please purchase any raw bones from a reputable source; you can put them in boiling water for a few seconds if concerned about bacteria. Some prefer to give knuckle bones rather than weight-bearing bones (e.g., from the leg of a cow) which might have greater risk of splitting. Bones like Dynamic Pet Product's "Real Ham Bone" can break into pellets and cause deadly blockages. **Always** supervise

you dog when he/she is chewing on a bone. Whenever a bone (or any toy) can fit completely inside the dog's mouth, please take it away.

4. **Please be aware of Canidae's new formula.** While Canidae is not using tainted ingredients as did the many brands involved in large recalls over the last 1-2 years, their new formula has made some dogs ill-- anything from gastrointestinal upset to bloody stools. More information about their new formula can be found at [www.canidae.com](http://www.canidae.com). However, whenever your dog has blood in his or her stool or urine, please contact your Vet immediately.

5. **Protect your dog from antifreeze because most brands prove deadly.** Its sweet smell attracts many dogs that lap up the pungent liquid. Please use a pet-friendly alternative to antifreeze, to help keep your friend safe.

6. **Holiday tips . . .** Keep any food gifts up high—chocolate, alcohol, grapes, raisins, and more are toxic to dogs. Poinsettias and mistletoe are dangerous for chewing. Supervise burning candles and keep them out of reach. If a candle is low to the ground, dogs can light themselves on fire and/or start a house fire. If you have a Christmas tree, cover its water (pine sap is dangerous if ingested) and secure it to a wall or the ceiling with line/hook to prevent it from being knocked over (works for young children, too!). Protect cords so no one gets tangled/strangled, and keep decorations high enough to avoid being confused with a toy; keep only pet-safe decorations on the lower parts of the tree.

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## *Pawgust Fest—Splashing Success!*



*The biggest Lab party we know of took place in August and raised nearly \$6,000 for LEARN!! Special thanks to Mitzi Heytow, patron saint of Senior Labs and our inspirational hostess, sponsors and donors, the LEARN volunteers who made it happen, and the dogs and their families who attended and made it so much fun!*

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Would you like to "retrieve" *The Retriever* via email? If so, please email [newsletter@Labadoption.org](mailto:newsletter@Labadoption.org) with "Mailing List" in the Subject line.

To subscribe to our printed edition, please mail your name and address with a \$5 check to: LEARN, P.O. Box 292, Cross Plains, WI 53528. Subscriptions are for a calendar year and are non-refundable. (We cannot prorate subscriptions.) For back issues, please visit [www.Labadoption.org](http://www.Labadoption.org).

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## ***Annual Laps for Labs Happy Success***

Held October 11<sup>th</sup> at beautiful Rock Cut State Park, IL, *this annual fundraiser* brought fun for all and funds to help other Labs. Watch for info on next year's in the summer newsletter!



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## ***Congrats to Labbies who found their new families!***

### **July 2008**

Murphy - Pamm Wonsettler  
Hildy - Nancy Kloss Bruzzini  
Hulia - Matt & Emily Keon  
Rex - Dave & Kristin Kaczmarek  
Alfie - Lynn & Theresa Koch  
Cooper - Randy & Stephanie Rodgers  
George - Steven & Karen Byerly  
Lenny - Charlene Salte  
Montana - Charles Martin & Kari Smith  
Edsel - Matt & Stephanie Watrud  
Maggie - Stanley & Carol Antczak

### **August 2008**

Ringo - Keith & Karen Roeseler  
Abby - Steven & Darlene Metz  
Lexi - Stacey Lucas  
Polar - Jason & Fonda Lewis  
Ditka - Tom & Dawn Mainus  
Tuk - Jeffery Skaiife  
Hunter - Lee Ann & Zach Short  
Sadie (Katie) - Kevin & Nancy Laga  
Lola - Debra & Frederick Johnson  
Olivia - Joseph & Jaimi Clementi

### **September 2008**

Cocoa - Steve & Kym Denzien  
Buster - Dale & Lisa Engwall  
Lucy - Lynn Keller  
Maxx - Robert Hess  
Hunter - Lawrence Victory  
Merlin (Hendrix) - John & Nancy DeFord  
Johnny - Danielle Santori  
Izabelle "Izzy" - Jordan & Debra Hadelman

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## ***Martha's Christmas Miracle***

*by Bilinda Marshall 2007 (c)*

Martha was sitting in her living room watching television this Christmas Eve, alone as she had been for the last five years. All of her children had married and moved to the four corners of the nation, her youngest, a surgery resident at the Vet School across the state had planned on coming home, but had been assigned to work the emergency clinic and couldn't find a replacement. Martha told herself that having Sally working to help the sick and injured animals this Christmas Eve was worth being alone, besides, Sally would be driving over for Christmas dinner the next afternoon.

All the animals had been fed and now were safely in either the kennel building or lazily laying around the house. Martha had to stop to think how many dogs she had at her house this Christmas, she sighed when she realized there

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were 16. She did rescue and the number of dogs was always changing with some dogs being adopted, and new abandoned dogs coming in. Feeling overwhelmed by the number of dogs she had and all the dogs still left in shelters to die because there was no room for them in rescue, Martha seriously wondered if she should stop working rescue. If she didn't have all these dogs, she could have flown to any of her other children's homes for the holidays to be with family. Besides, the heartbreak of seeing each dog in such need was beginning to really weigh on her. Tonight she had a new dog, brought home that day. Martha didn't really plan on adding another dog but on her way home from the store she saw a dog lying on the side of the road. Certain the dog was dead, Martha stopped to pick up the body and take it home for a burial. As she got closer, she recognized the shell of an Alaskan Malamute, the breed she rescued. Covered by cuts and festering wounds, what fur was left was matted and filthy, it was so skinny

that laying there you could see each rib and its hipbones were the widest part of his body. With tears in her eyes, mourning for what once had been a majestic animal now reduced to almost a skeleton, she reached down to give the poor dog one last pat on the head. "Oh, you poor boy, what a way to end your life. Well, at least I can name you and give you a decent farewell." As her tears fell on the dog's head, one eye slowly opened and the tail gave a single wag. "You're alive! Everything will be OK now, I'll take you home and you will have a soft bed and food tonight." She said, tears streaming down her face, this time from happiness.

The rest of the afternoon was spent cleaning the dog's wounds and making sure he was able to eat and drink water. Martha set up the large run in the kennel building for him. A soft blanket and a thick foam pad was to be his bed, fresh water and food beside him. Papers for his 'necessary functions' were placed at the far end of the run. He lay there watching every move she made.

Martha left the dog resting on his bed, somewhat surprised at the reaction of the rest of the dogs in the kennel. Pandemonium usually broke out with all the other dogs wooing and barking when a new dog was brought in; tonight all the other dogs just stood and silently watched as Martha cared for the new dog. Thankful the other dogs were not disturbing the new boy, Martha went to the house to finish preparations for tomorrow's dinner.

Later that evening Martha went down to the kennel to check on the new boy and feed the other dogs. As she walked in the door the new boy shakily stood to greet her. As she was straightening up the kennel after feeding and exercising the dogs, she saw her microchip reader. "Well, this will be a waste of time" she thought as she ran the reader over the dog's body. BEEP! The reader had located a chip! Writing the number down, she hurried to the house to call the chip registry and report the found dog. As she suspected on Christmas Eve, all she got was a machine. Very late that night, the phone rang. Martha answered and a strange voice was on the other end. "Did you find a dog with a microchip?" "Yes, are you the registry needing more information?" Martha asked. "No, the registry called us and told us you found our dog!" and then the man broke down crying. After composing himself, he continued. "The dog you found is BISS AM/CAN/INT CH Wasilla's Ice Sculpture, WPD, WTD, WLD, TT, CGC but to us he is our heart, the love of our life, Icy. Three years ago Icy was stolen from his exercise area in our back yard. We did everything we could think of to find him, but lately we had almost given up hope of ever seeing him again. This is a miracle. We are leaving now to come pick him up. We are about 14 hours from you so we will see you and Icy in the morning."

Martha was crying, indeed it was a miracle! And the new

dog now had a name, his own name and his people were coming for him. What a wonderful Christmas gift. Martha hurried down to the kennel to let Icy know that his humans had been found and they were on their way to take him home. As Martha walked up to Icy's kennel he stood to greet her, "Icy, yes, I know your name and I have spoken to your people. They're coming to take you home." As she was talking to Icy, she heard the old clock in the building strike midnight. Much to her amazement, Icy said "Thank you." Martha thought, now I am sure I have been around dogs too long, I could swear I heard Icy speak. Icy continued "Martha, yes I am talking to you in human language, you see, at the stroke of midnight on Christmas Day, all animals can speak. Let me tell you what happened to me today."

"I have been kept in a dark barn for a long time by some very mean people who beat me and often forgot to feed me. Two days ago I found a loose board on the barn and was able to escape. I walked as fast as I could, looking for my people, or at least for some kind person to feed me and give me a warm place to sleep before I died. I was in the middle of a big field when I couldn't walk or even crawl any more, I lay down, knowing I was about to cross to the Rainbow Bridge. As I stepped onto the Bridge, an Angel came towards me."

"Icy," the Angel said "If you agree, He has a job for you before cross the Bridge. There is a very kind human who needs you today to restore her spirit."

"Of course I agreed to help a human -- that is what Malamutes do. The Angel picked up my body and carried it to the side of a road and laid it down. The next thing I remember is you were scratching my ear and talking to me and your tears were falling on my face. You have cared for me this day."

Martha heard a chorus of voices all about her. To her amazement she was surrounded not only by her dogs, but dogs she had rescued and sent on to forever homes, all voicing stories how Martha had cared for them and restored them to health and loved them, thanking her for her love.

The first Malamute Martha had rescued many years ago stepped to the front of the gathering and said, "Martha, you took us in to your home, cared for us, healed us both in body and spirit then, even though it broke your heart, sent us on to our new forever families. This gave us a life we would never have had without you. Others of us there, never were adopted and lived out our lives with you, loved and cared for as if we were your own dogs. In our hearts we are your dogs. Thank you."

Then one small mixed breed puppy stepped forward from the back and said, "Miss Martha, you never held me nor fed me, you see I am speaking for all the shelter dogs and cats gathered here for which you did all you could. We



understand that you can't save us all, but you read our shelter stories, knowing we would cross the Bridge without knowing a home of our own, and you cried for us. We thank you for that. You see, we knew you cared and loved us, too. And that love helped us as we crossed. We thank you and all the other Rescuers for that small act of love." Icy looked at Martha and told her, "It is getting late and you will have many people here tomorrow to celebrate Christmas. And you have your rescue work to continue. Our time to be able to talk to you is growing short, but

always remember what happened tonight. What you do for the animals is a gift to us and to Him, the Father of us all. Each of us, animals of every species, needs people like you. Please keep on helping. You are doing the work of Angels." At that point all of the dogs in unison said "Thank You," and their voices blended into a joyous howl which echoed from the heavens to the ends of the earth.

*Humbly offered as a Christmas Gift to all who love animals.*



## 2009 LEARN Calendars Now Available!

**Great gift idea! The calendar features happy LEARN alums and fosters.**

(<<< representative page)

The cost is \$12.00 + \$1.25 for mailing. Please send your payment to LEARN at P.O. Box 164, Island Lake, IL 60042 or contact Chris Wallen at: [chris4labs@gmail.com](mailto:chris4labs@gmail.com).

**Enormous Thanks!** The following people generously donated money, supplies, or services to help our rescued Labs. Without your help, these Labs wouldn't be alive today.

8pawsup.com  
Lara Adam, *in Memory of Balou*  
Peter & Amy Arzamendi  
Backcountry K-9 LLC  
Baxter's Employee Giving Campaign  
Lisa Beckers  
Paul & Mary Benson  
Gary & Ginny Butterfield  
Jan Cingatura  
Michael Connor  
Stephen & Amy Corbisier  
Randy Coutre  
John & Kay Day  
Florence Fitzgerald Found  
Beth Frechette, *in honor of Ebony*  
Jackie Eisenberg  
Fulton County Humane Society  
Julie Grosso

Bruce & Connie Harrison  
J.B. Henriques  
Mary Beth Hildebrandt  
Charles Himsel  
Marian Hoyne  
Georgene Hrdlicka  
iGive.com Holdings  
Linda Jupp  
Kenneth & Carol Kosciak  
Theresa Kuehn  
Geri LaVine, Popp  
Marcia Lockwood, *in memory of Sammy*  
Marinel Mateo, *in memory of Lady Martin*  
Paul & Linda Merkel  
Andrea Moen  
Kenneth Myszka

Jody Page, Pages Healthy Paws  
Angela Pantazon, The Lang Companies  
Petco  
Helen Pollock  
Susan Pomerantz  
Marsha Rather  
C.A. Roloff  
Dan Schroeder  
Jeanne Schuett, *in memory of Georgia*  
Gretta Signore, *in memory of Harley*  
Shannon Steffen  
Cheri Stockhausen  
Patricia Triola, *in memory of Bernie Rosengarden*  
Ralph & Nancy Waites, *in memory of Angel*  
Mr. Leonard Young, *in memory of Angel*

# Holiday Gift Ideas that Support LEARN

Please visit [www.labadoption.org/merchandise/](http://www.labadoption.org/merchandise/) for easy ordering. If you're not online, feel free to call us at (847) 289-PETS (7387) and leave a message. A volunteer will return your call. Thanks for thinking of Labs!



**The Gift of Sponsorship!** This season, consider sponsoring one of L.E.A.R.N.'s foster dogs for an extra special gift. You can be a sponsor yourself or offer a sponsorship in someone else's name. We will mail a certificate acknowledging your sponsorship along with a picture of the sponsored Lab to the person you designate.

All prices below include shipping costs.



**Edible Doggie cards** (also available for Kitties!) for that always hungry canine relative or neighbor! \$5 each.



**Contemporary Lab holiday cards**, 12 for \$12. (left)  
Traditional Lab holiday cards, 10 for \$12. (right) Many more selections on our website



Single, double and triple **Switchplates with a Lab theme**. (\$10, \$16, \$20 for different sizes, respectively. Double shown above.)



The NEW **FURminator deShedding Tool** is the answer to all shedding challenges because it reduces shedding up to 90% by removing the loose, dead undercoat without damaging the topcoat. Easy for you and your dog and it **WORKS!** The savings on vacuum bags will pay for itself. (Small, \$30; large, \$40)



Give a dog the gift of more safety with **Lighted Tag Lights and Collar Covers**. (\$6.50 each)

LEARN also has many T-shirt, Hats, specialty collars and leashes, training materials, doggie backpacks, doggie travel beds, and much more!



(T-shirt)



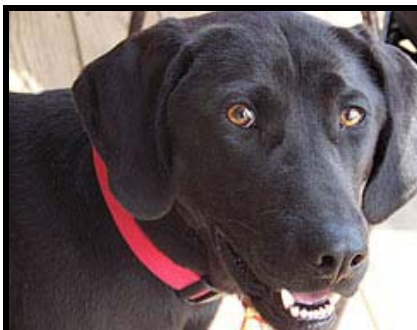
Not sure what your dog-lover wants most? Consider a gift certificate.



# The Greatest Tales—What Foster Homes Enable

Foster homes are our “featured volunteers”! The holiday season always brings more dogs to shelters, and with the economic crisis, *at no time has fostering a Lab ever been so important.* Fostering gives life: in too many cases, a Lab is literally hours from being euthanized and rescued. These turn out to be some of the best dogs. Often black dogs fall victim to the “Black Dog Syndrome,” a bias against their color. Biggest thanks to all foster homes!

Please visit: [www.Labadoption.org/linkpages/HowToHelp/Fosters.htm](http://www.Labadoption.org/linkpages/HowToHelp/Fosters.htm) for more fostering information, or contact Donna Spangler at [nortntrix@aol.com](mailto:nortntrix@aol.com) or call (847) 289-PETS (7387) and leave Donna a message. LEARN pays your foster dog’s vet bills. All we ask of foster homes is food and Love. Thanks for considering it.



*At 8 months Toby, a stray, found himself in a very small, high-kill shelter, next on the list. Recognizing Toby’s sweetness, the shelter worker sent out a plea for help; LEARN answered and offered to help two other dogs. But the shelter worker never received the message. The next morning, the Vet called to have Toby brought in for euthanization. With literally no time to spare, the LEARN volunteer made a follow-up call just as the shelter worker was about to bring Toby to the Vet. Toby was adopted by a man who had lost his long-time canine buddy and is now loved and royally spoiled. So thrilled with his new pal, 3 months later the man adopted Tuk from LEARN Thus one life saved became two!*

*Luke spent an entire year in a shelter before LEARN rescued him. After so long in a shelter, Luke needed to learn to be a dog again. A family with another dog adopted him, and the two canines became fast buddies. At his new home, a photo shows him surrounded by stuffed toys that he brought to his “dog bed lair.” His mom teaches training classes and now Luke helps other dogs overcome their shyness and fears.*



*Sam’s family surrendered him to a shelter just before his 9th birthday. The family adopted a puppy weeks after surrendering Sam and according to Vet records, told their Vet that Sam died. Sam stayed at the back of the kennel at the shelter and would not engage with anyone. When anyone expressed an interest in him, he spent the “meet” time looking out the window, as if waiting for his family. Two LEARN volunteers saw Sam at the shelter and offered to help. Sam arrived at his foster home pretty depressed, but within 5 minutes of arriving and finding the toys, his tail started wagging. After a few months of TLC in foster, Sam was adopted. Five years later, about to celebrate his 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, he couldn’t be happier or a more loyal and loving companion.*

*Hunter, a 6-year old yellow Lab, was a house dog before being moved to a barn for 7 months and only had contact with humans once a day when they filled his food bowl. LEARN helped him turn his life around. Adopted in September, Hunter’s new family says he fits in perfectly and is, “a complete and wonderful joy for us!” They said Hunter is “everything we dreamed he would be.” Further, “Hunter is every good thing that we could possibly say .. he’s wonderful, fabulous to everyone and everyone loves him. We absolutely are in love with him. We are very grateful to have him.”*



**It came to me that every time I lose a dog they take a piece of my heart with them. And every new dog who comes into my life, gifts me with a piece of their heart. If I live long enough, all the components of my heart will be dog, and I will become as generous and loving as they are. (Author Unknown)**

## ***The Lang Companies' Great Generosity***

*Extra special thanks to Angela Pantazon and The Lang Companies for donating over 1,100 pieces of merchandise to LEARN. The items included: Labrador Retriever calendars, mugs and travel mugs, varieties of note and list pads, boxed gift cards, and much more. The items were incredibly popular and almost completely sold. Angela, your generosity has helped many Labs have better lives. Thank you so much.*

*Please visit [www.lang.com](http://www.lang.com) for excellent gift and shopping opportunities. Lang stores can be found in five Wisconsin locations: Delafield, Milwaukee (Mayfair and Southridge Malls), Door County, and JohnsonCreek. Lang's Thanksgiving Sale is November 20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> at their New Berlin Factory Store!*

## ***Help LEARN win Petfinder's "Animal Rescue Site \$100,000 Challenge"***

Go to <http://www.theanimalrescuesite.com/clickToGive/shelterchallenge.faces> and type in

**"Labrador Education And Retriever Network," then click "vote."**

**You may cast one vote every day** until December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008, midnight (PST). The more friends you can rally to vote for LEARN, the better our chances of winning. We're counting on you!

**Grand Prize:** One \$25,000 grant!

**Runner Up:** One \$10,000 grant!

**State Winners\*:** Fifty-four \$1,000 state grants

**Weekly Winners\*\*:** Eleven \$1,000 weekly grants

## ***EVENTS***

1. **Great Lakes Pet Expo**, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 10 am to 6 pm at the [Wisconsin Exhibition Center](#), 8200 West Greenfield Avenue, West Allis, WI. P: (414) 727-8840
2. **LEARN Winter Reunion**, Sun Prairie, WI, in either February or March—look for details on our website!



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