



Must Love Greyhounds

By Melissa Stillman

Greyhound Ranch Adoptions is in the business of finding retired racers forever families.

Greyhounds—once a favorite companion of Egyptian pharaohs and English nobility, now best known for sprinting at speeds of up to 45 miles per hour—are very unique dogs. Unlike most dog breeds, greyhounds are bred exclusively for sport. Greyhound farms begin training the dogs as early as 1 year old, and a racing career typically ends by 3 years old; occasionally, training or racing injuries will sideline a dog at an even younger age.

Husband and wife team **Leslie**

Woliner and **Richard Ornstein**, of **Longwood**, founded Greyhound Ranch Adoptions in 2003, to arrange adoptions for greyhounds as they were retired from the racing circuit. Greyhounds taken in by the group are provided with any medical care needed for injuries and then vaccinated and spayed/neutered in preparation for adoption.

“Failed Fostering”

The dogs are housed in volunteer foster homes around Central Florida.

Over time, a phenomenon has developed that is jokingly referred to as “failed fostering.” Foster families get so attached to the dog they are caring for, they choose to adopt it.

“It happens quite often,” says Ornstein. “They might have one greyhound, and then they serve as a foster and just love the dog; now there are two greyhounds. Eventually, they get to their personal saturation point where, when they foster again, it won’t ‘fail.’”

continued



COURTESY OF ROBERT & BARBARA MCGUIRE

Leslie Woliner co-founded Greyhound Ranch Adoptions to find permanent homes for the affectionate dogs.

Working with as many as 25 greyhounds at a time, Greyhound Ranch Adoptions' goal is to find each dog a "forever home." They ask that, if the new owner isn't able to keep the dog, it is returned to the group.

"Greys have an average lifespan of 12 to 15 years, which is great for a big breed," says Ornstein. "They start out as athletes, so they are healthy to start with and have a good jump on living long. We are looking for adoptive families willing to make a life-long commitment to the dog."

At weekend meet and greets, held at local pet stores, the public can interact with available greyhounds and investigate them as potential pets. For those not able to meet the dogs in person, the Greyhound Ranch Adoptions' Web site provides a bio and photos on each dog in need of adoption. The site also features Happy Tails, success stories from recent placements.

A Circle of Volunteers

As a non-profit, the group depends on a circle of devoted volunteers: Woliner and Ornstein, **Debbie** and **James Harsh**, **Laurie Campbell**, **Mary Stewart**, **Eric Robinson** and **Barbara McGuire**.

Additional volunteers are needed

to help at meet and greet events, transport dogs to veterinary appointments and participate in fundraisers, but qualified foster homes are their most urgent need. Added housing would allow them to take even more dogs into the program.

therapy dogs. McGuire says, "Greyhounds are pleasing dogs, very sensitive. With Irene, I feel like she can pick out who needs her attention."

In their six years of operation, Greyhound Ranch Adoptions has coordinated a staggering 500 greyhound adoptions. Ornstein

“People see greyhounds and know that they run fast, but they are so calm, gentle and affectionate that they [also] make the best pets.”

With one of her adopted greyhounds named Irene, McGuire, who admits she's a "failed foster times two," visits hospitals, nursing homes and camps for terminally ill children as a part of Lake County's Caring Canine Therapy Dogs organization.

Because of their docile demeanor, greyhounds make excellent

summarizes their pro-greyhound approach to the work: "You have to love the dogs, and the breed itself is just amazing. People see greyhounds and know that they run fast, but they are so calm, gentle and affectionate that they make, we think, the best pets." **L**



Foster mom Debbie Harsh with Mable, a greyhound who is available for adoption.

Visit CentralFlorida-Lifestyle.com to see more greyhound photos and find out how to help Greyhound Ranch Adoptions.