



Foster Family Guide

January 2010

Introduction

Thank you for being willing to provide a temporary home for a golden retriever in need. Fostering a dog isn't always easy as dogs may come to you dirty, sick, hurt or fearful. Golden Retrievers are the most loving and resilient breed. You'll give a little piece of your heart to every dog you foster and in return, after weeks or months, you'll be given unconditional love by the dog you help transition to a permanent, loving home.

There will be dogs you opt to keep, but please try to have room for "one more" as without families like yours, beautiful goldens may never have the opportunity to find their "forever" home.

About 80% of our dogs come from owners who can no longer care for their golden retriever. The most common reasons for giving up a dog include:

- Not enough time for the dog.
- Moving.
- Owner is ill or has died.
- Cannot afford the dog.

We are usually called when a golden retriever is at Tri-county Animal Shelter, but if you happen to notice a golden is there, please let the Intake/Foster Coordinator know by calling 301.994.0132.

What Information Will I Have About a Dog Before I Decide to Foster?

When Golden Retriever Rescue of Southern Maryland, Inc. is notified of a dog that needs to be re-homed an *intake assessment* is completed to learn as much about the dog as possible. Questions include:

- Basic information about the dog – age, sex, has the dog ever bitten, behavior around kids, cats and other dogs, reason for give up.
- Medical information – last vaccinations, type of heartworm/flea prevention, any chronic medical conditions.
- Owner demographics.

People who give up their dog do not always provide accurate information, but we'll do our best to ensure a successful foster placement.

What Do I Do if I Want to Foster a Dog?

Once you have a home visit and a *Foster Agreement* on file, you will be added to the *Foster Family Distribution List*. An email with all of the information that is known about a dog is sent to all foster families and board members. **If you are available to foster, hit "reply all" when you respond to the email so other families will know that a foster family has been found.** If you cannot foster the dog it is nice to reply as well so it is known that you received the email.

We can sometimes work with an owner on the date the dog will come into rescue, but we need to pick up dogs from the shelter as soon as possible.

Your dog may be vet checked before being placed in your home. However, most of the time you will make a vet appointment that is convenient for you. Keep your foster dog separate from your own animals if you have any indications the foster dog may have a contagious medical condition. It is always a good idea to pick up poop until you are sure your new charge does not have internal parasites.

It is also important to ensure your dog is current on flea/tick prevention and has a bordetella vaccination.

Review your insurance policy to ensure you are covered for any damage a dog might cause as the rescue does not reimburse for damages to your property.



How Do I Prepare for a Foster Dog?

If you are already a dog owner, preparing for a foster dog will be easy. If you are not a dog owner you'll need to provide the following supplies for your guest dog:

- Water/food bowl – stainless steel or ceramic.
- Dog bed – “memory foam” will be appreciated by an older dog. Younger dogs can sleep on folded quilts or blankets.
- A few toys – tennis balls, kongs, squeaky plush toy, etc.
- Treats – low fat tidbits you can use as rewards, frozen marrow or soup bones, bully sticks, etc.
- Crate or baby gate – if you are going to purchase a crate get one big enough for a large dog to stand, turn around and lay down. Crates are available to borrow.
- Brush.
- You might consider an additional flexilead if you use one to walk your dog.

Anything you purchase for a foster dog is tax deductible. Remember, you can also claim mileage for transporting a dog, attending events, etc.

Your rescue dog will come with a 6 ft lead, collar, rescue tag, Frontline, Interceptor, a bag of premium dry food. Sometimes people donate dog beds, chew toys or other items and they will be sent along as well.

If no one is home in your family during the work week, consider getting your foster dog on Friday afternoon/evening. This allows you the weekend to get to know the dog and for the dog to get to know the household.



What Medical Care is Provided?

Every effort is made to have owners who give up their dogs get a current vet check and provide a copy of the dog's medical records before turning their dog over to Golden Retriever Rescue of Southern Maryland, Inc.

Before adoption, all dogs should:

- Be spayed or neutered if necessary (including blood work/pain medication.)
- Have a current rabies vaccination.(Send proof to new family at adoption.)
- Have a current DHLPP (distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parvovirus, parainfluenza and send proof to new family at adoption.)
- Have a heartworm test if not on prevention and send at least a one month's supply to the new family at adoption. (Interceptor is what we most commonly use. Be sure to note the next due date.)
- Worm/parasite test/treatment.
- Be treated for flea/tick prevention. Provide at least a one month's supply at adoption with due date noted.
- Be treated for minor problems such as skin/ear infections/worms.
- Have at least a one month supply of medications for chronic conditions such as seizures, arthritis, and thyroid, if needed.
- Blood work for a senior golden or one that appears ill.

Treatment for other medical problems, unless emergent, must be approved by Golden Retriever Rescue.

(Note: It's a good idea to take a copy of this list when you go to the vet.)

The rescue has an account with the following vet hospitals:

- St Mary's County: St Mary's Veterinary Hospital/All Kinds Animal Hospital/ Tidewater Veterinary Hospital.
- Calvert County: Solomon's Island Animal Hospital/Dunkirk Animal Hospital/Prince Frederick Animal Hospital.
- Charles County: Waldorf Animal Hospital.

When you make an appointment for you foster dog, tell them you are with Golden Retriever Rescue of Southern Maryland and the charges will be billed to the rescue. If you use a different vet and they are willing to give the rescue at least a 20% discount let the foster coordinator know so an account can be set up.

If there are questions about veterinary care that you are unable to answer please refer the vet staff to the Intake/Foster Coordinator at 301.994.0132 or 240.925.8817.



Introduce Your Foster Dog



If possible, **introduce your new dog on neutral ground** away from your property when you bring him/her home. It can be as close as a couple of hundred yards down the street, but it removes the territory issue. This is especially important if you think your dog may be protective of your property.

Many find it helpful to immediately **walk their new foster dog and resident dog**. Your new dog becomes familiar with the neighborhood, can relieve him/herself, if necessary, and both dogs see that you are in control.

Next **allow your dog off lead in your fenced yard**. This allows him/her to become familiar with the yard and “mark” his new home.

Enter the house and show your new dog around. By the way, your dog will explore everything, so dog-proof your house (place shoes inside closets, put electrical cords out of reach, move prized objects to higher ground).

If you are introducing a male dog to your home and he lifts his leg, give him a firm "No" to disrupt the action, and then take him outside immediately.

Your dog will be excited and anxious about his new temporary home. Don't be surprised at panting and pacing, housetraining accidents, excessive drinking or chewing, or gastric upset. Tell every member of your family to resist the temptation to overwhelm a new dog. Give him some time and space to get settled.



Feed Your Foster Dog

Golden Retriever Rescue of Southern Maryland, Inc. will provide a bag of premium dry dog food. If the dog has been given up by the owner they will be asked to provide a small supply of the food their dog typically eats. Transition the dog to the new food by gradually decreasing the amount of the “old” food and increasing the amount of the new, premium food over the course of several days. This may prevent tummy upsets. Many dogs don't eat well the first day. A can of food is usually sent along to tempt your new pup.

Dogs, as people, enjoy variety. Don't hesitate to add lean meats, poultry, fruits and vegetables to your dog's diet. Since golden retrievers often have food allergies and many are prone to cancer, we are encouraging new owners to feed a grain free diet.

There are a number of excellent dry dog foods on the market. Unfortunately most are not sold in grocery stores. The following provides tips on what to look for in a quality dog food.

Look For Foods that

- List whole meat or fish as their first two or more ingredients.
- Do not have meat "by-products".
- Are made with organic ingredients.
- Good examples include:
 - Wellness Core. (PETCO carries)
 - Innova Evo. (PETCO carries)
 - Natural Balance Potato and Duck. (PETCO carries)
 - Orijens. (Clippers Canine Café carries.)
 - Chicken Soup for the Soul.
 - Canidae. (Clippers Canine Café carries)
 - Honest Kitchen. (Clippers Canine Café carries)
 - Van Patten's Natural Balance. (PETCO carries)
 - Organix. (PETCO carries)
 - Newman's Own (Commissary carries)
 - Royal Canin Natural Blend.
 - Honest Kitchen Embark (Clippers Canine Café carries)

Don't Feed

Foods that contain low-quality ingredients such as animal fat, meat meal, animal digest.

- Products whose protein is derived almost completely from meat by-products.
- Products lacking expiration dates.
- Foods containing artificial coloring.
- Products containing "meat and bone meal" as these are very low-quality proteins.
- Foods that are sweetened to temp the dog's appetite.
- Avoid the following:
 - Purina Dog Chow.
 - Cycle.
 - Gravy Train.
 - Cesar.
 - Alpo.
 - Purina's Beneful.
 - Pedigree Complete Nutrition.
 - Dad's.
 - Kibbles 'n Bits.
 - Old Roy.

Learn More

The authority on dog foods is *Whole Dog Journal* available at <http://www.whole-dog-journal.com/>. It's a bit pricey - \$39 for an annual subscription, but it's the BEST short journal (24 pages). There's a companion pub –

Your Dog, published by Cummings Vet School that's also excellent and a bit more conventional available at <http://www.tufts.edu/vet/publications/yourdog/index.html>.

Treats such as kongs with low fat peanut butter that have been frozen will keep your dog busy for quite a while. Frosty paws, available at most grocery stores in the ice cream section, are a refreshing snack for your dog when you have ice cream. Pizzles, bully sticks, raw marrow bones, Wholesome Hide rawhides (available online) are healthier chews that will keep your dog busy.

Feeding plain rice can help a dog get through a digestive problem. If your dog is on antibiotics, add plain yogurt to his food to help replace the good bacteria in his system. For health reasons, use stainless steel or porcelain bowls without painted surfaces. Plastic bowls are a breeding ground for germs. Wash food and water bowls between feedings.

Don't feed your dog grapes, raisins, macadamia nuts, chocolate, products containing xylitol or onions.



Houstraining

Your new dog may have an “accident” during the first couple of days at your home. They may urinate submissively, be unsure of how to “ask” to go out or they may be overwhelmed or stressed by their new environment. Most of our dogs are house trained when we get them. House training is usually easy as goldens want to please. To house train:

- **Watch for signs** of discomfort, restlessness or circling. Take him outside to a close-by potty place. Realize that when a dog relieves himself in the wrong place, it's not out of spite. It's because he had to go.
- **Praise when she goes potty.** Give her a treat or kibble to reinforce the behavior. If 15 or so minutes pass without pottying, bring the dog inside for about five minutes and then go back out.
- **Confine when you can't watch...**in a crate or a part of the kitchen. Don't leave food out. Do leave water.

- **Realize that dogs can't "hold it" for long periods.** Even adult dogs may need a mid- day dog walker if you work long hours. Puppies need to urinate and defecate frequently, so they'll need to go out at least every 4 hours to get housetrained.
- **Crate-train.** Many use a crate to housetrain. It is based on the premise that dogs don't like to mess in their sleeping area. Use a crate large enough for your dog to lie down and turn around. **Don't leave a dog in a crate for more than four hours without a break.**
- **Feed on a schedule.** Feed your dog the same times each day. Take him out after feeding. Young puppies are usually fed three times a day; older puppies and adult dogs twice a day. Don't make abrupt changes in food.
- **Keep a potty routine.** Take your dog outside first thing in the morning, when you get home from work, within an hour after the dog eats, just before bedtime, and following vigorous play. Young puppies may need to be taken outside every two hours. They will get house trained much faster and reliably if someone can take them out midday during the workday.
- **Don't end the walk outside when your dog potties.** Or she'll get the idea that outdoor fun ends when she relieves herself. This is why some dogs hold it until they are brought back inside. After your dog "goes," praise, give a treat and keep walking a bit longer.
- **Interrupt vs. scold.** Typically, a dog goes because she just has to. If you catch her in the act, interrupt the action with a loud, startling AH-AH-AH!! or NO! and an immediate trip outside. Use a loud, deep, firm voice. You want to alert, not punish, your dog. When she resumes relieving herself outside, praise lavishly.
- **Punishment teaches only fear.** Never shove a dog's nose in his mess or smack a dog which teaches him only to fear hands. A dog is unable to associate past behavior with a punishment he is now receiving. He can associate the pain and anger with the person administering the punishment.
- **Clean up.** Try not to let her see you clean up a mess, or she may think it's an interactive game. Use an enzyme-based pet odor neutralizer like *Nature's Miracle* or *Simple Solution* to kill the urine scent. Cleaning up extends to the outside, too. Many dogs dislike going in a poop-riddled yard. Note: paper training postpones learning the desired behavior.



Bedtime



It's best if your dog sleeps in a room with the pack - you and your family. The dog should have her own bed to sleep on. For some dogs, sleeping on the human's bed can aggravate dominant behaviors, so exercise caution.

The first few nights, you may want to confine your new dog in a crate in the bedroom, but start teaching your dog house manners so that you can provide increased freedom. It is not unusual for your new dog to bark or whine if confined to a crate. Dogs want to be with their pack members. (This is why dogs kept outside often are nuisance barkers or destructive. They are stressed being kept apart.)

Place the crate or bed where she can see you. If she barks at bedtime, correct her with a firm "No Bark!" Praise softly when she quiets down. Safe chew toys will give your dog something to do until she falls asleep.

Eventually you'll want to wean your dog from her crate. Pick a night after you've tired her out and keep the crate door open. You can transition to just a dog bed from there.

A night-time housetraining hint: put plastic bags in front of the bedroom side of the door. If she gets up, the crackling sound will alert you to your dog's need to go out.



Conquer Common Behavior Problems

Undesirable behavior is in the eye of the beholder. Many "bad habits" (chewing, mouthing, digging, jumping, chasing, barking) are *natural, normal* behaviors for a dog. But you can control and replace them with desirable behavior by taking the time to work with your dog. Give your dog opportunities to do something you can reward.

“Hyper” Dogs - Most often, there is nothing wrong with reportedly hyperactive dogs. Dogs need attention and exercise. When people don't give them enough, the dog has to do something with that excess energy. Teach your dog to retrieve as that is an easy way to exercise them.



Chewing - Chewing is how young dogs explore their environments and mature dogs relieve stress. Provide plenty of acceptable items to chew. Move objects you don't want chewed out of reach. Take up throw rugs. Shield or hide power cords. Spray Bitter Apple on furniture legs and wood trim. Make sure your dog always has access to his own chew toys. Bully sticks, frozen marrow or "soup bones" and Wholesome Hides are ideal as they take some time to chew even for the most aggressive chewers.

When you catch him chewing something off-limits, direct him to "Leave it" or "Drop it". This requires that you first teach your dog this command using positive reinforcement. When the dog drops the item, praise lavishly and give him an acceptable item to chew.

Jumping - Jumping and mounting are behaviors dogs choose to seek a higher rank in the pack; sometimes they just jump out of excitement. Keep people from exciting your dog to the point of jumping up, barking or nipping. Often, jumping can be discouraged by simply ignoring the dog until he settles down. Just turn and walk away. You also can carry tidbits, and provide a treat and attention only when the dog sits calmly.



Furniture-hogging - Decide on the furniture and other house rules, then all family members must abide by the decisions. Consistency is key. Many trainers advise that dogs not be allowed on furniture because the elevated position can give a dog the sense that he is the alpha and can lead to aggressive displays. Instead, give dogs their own comfy beds and crates.

Grooming Basics

Your foster dog may be very dirty when she comes to you. Please give him or her a bath. This may be the first bath the dog has ever had! If your dog is very matted, tick covered or for some reason you are unable to bathe your dog, talk with the Intake/Foster Coordinator to make arrangements for payment to have your dog groomed. PETCO has a self- service dog bathing area that you can use for \$10, but your dog must have proof of a rabies vaccine in order to use it.

Lift your dog's ears and note if there is a smell. Wipe the ear canals gently with a soft cloth or cotton pad. If you notice a blackish discharge, the ears are very red, or the dog is hesitant to let you touch her ears it likely she has an ear infection.

Use a commercial ear flush or a mixture of one part white vinegar to four parts warm water to clean the ears. Pour a small amount into an ear. Gently rub the solution into the ear by rubbing the base of the ear. Let your dog do the "doggie ear dance" and then wipe with a soft, dry cloth or cotton pad.

Many dogs are very hesitant to have their nails trimmed. Don't try to trim your foster dog's nails until you both are comfortable with each other. If the nails are so long that they interfere with the dog walking or if the dew claw is cutting into the dog's skin arrange to have a vet trim their nails. Get approval from Golden Retriever Rescue of Southern Maryland, Inc.

Brush your dog's teeth. It's so much cheaper than getting them professionally cleaned and most dogs actually like to get their teeth brushed with poultry or beef flavored toothpaste. Use a regular, soft, human brush. Start slowly. The first couple of times simply let the dog lick the tooth brush. Slowly work up to brushing canines and then the rest of the teeth. Focus on the outside of each tooth.

Assess Your Foster Dog

The Intake/Foster Coordinator will write a generic description of your dog to post on the web site. Once you get to know your foster dog, write a more specific description and forward to the intake coordinator to post on the web site. Please send pictures/videos to post on the web site to attract potential adopters as well.

As you get to know your dog, determine what his/her needs are to be successful with a permanent family. Do you have a youngster who needs the security of a large, physical fence in order to expend energy? Does your dog enjoy playing with other dogs? Does your dog like children? Get along with cats and other small animals? Does your dog need someone home much of the day otherwise they get anxious, bored or destructive?

It's helpful to have a list the factors your temporary dog will need to succeed so then only families that meet most of your criteria will be allowed to meet your dog.

Only approved families will be allowed to contact you. However, when potential adopters contact you they are often very eager and do not ask all of the questions they should to make an informed decision. Following is a form you can use to guide you as you get to know your foster dog and discuss your dog's needs with prospective families. Send a completed copy of this form home with an adoptive family.

Dog Information Sheet

DOG'S NAME _____ AGE _____ ID # _____

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Is the dog reliably house trained? How does he/she let you know they have to go?	___	___	
2. Does the dog have run of the house?	___	___	
3. Is the dog crate trained? (No more than 4 hrs during the day)	___	___	
4. Does the dog get along with other dogs?	___	___	
5. Does the dog get along with cats?	___	___	
6. Does the dog get along with children?	___	___	
7. What commands does the dog know? _____/_____/_____ _____/_____/_____/_____/_____			
8. Has the dog had obedience training?	___	___	
9. Is the dog leash trained?	___	___	
10. Does the dog like to ride in the car?	___	___	
11. Does the dog have any of the following behaviors? If so, how are they corrected?	___	___	
Chew inappropriate items		Dig	Jump Up
Mouthy – grab arm, clothes		Other	
12. How does the dog let you know s/he had to go potty?			
13. Does the dog have any fears?	___	___	
13. Does the dog have any dislikes?	___	___	
14. Does the dog like to play in water?	___	___	
15. Where does the dog sleep?			

16. What type of exercise does the dog get?

17. Describe any health problems or concerns the dog may have.

18. Date Heartworm Preventative is due _____

19. Date Flea & Tick Prevention is due _____

20. Feeding Instructions (Brand of food, amount & times during the day, include treats.)

21. What does the dog really enjoy (toys, games, walks, etc.)?

22. When is the next distemper, rabies and annual checkup due?

23. Foster Family contact info is....

Provide a copy of this form to the adoptive family

Meet Potential Adopters

All families who contact you will be approved. You select the family that best meets your foster dog's needs. Potential adoptive families will be instructed to contact you during the hours of 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. unless you specify otherwise.

It is best for potential families to come to your home to meet your foster dog to get a true picture of the dog. However, if you are uncomfortable with this, arrange to meet at a public location such as a park, PETCO, etc.

All family members including dogs (not cats) should meet the dog. Provide honest information about your foster dog. Note how they interact with your dog and how your dog interacts with them. Suggest they take a short walk with the dog. If you don't feel comfortable with the family, tell them another family is coming to meet the dog and you will make a decision about which family is best for your dog within a few days.

If you feel comfortable that a family and your foster dog are a good fit (remember, another Golden Rescue member has done a home visit with this family and given their blessing) complete the adoption agreement. Keep the signed agreement and provide a copy to the adopters.

Adopters are told to bring a dog tag with their telephone number imprinted on it. Have them put the tag on the collar before leaving your house. If they don't bring the tag, you do not have to complete the adoption or you may use a permanent marker to write their contact info on your dog's collar.

Send your foster dog to his/her forever family with:

- A completed Dog Information Sheet.
- Proof of rabies vaccination.
- Proof of Distemper vaccination.
- Copies of vet records.
- At least a one month supply of heart worm prevention (Interceptor).
- At least a one month supply of flea prevention (Frontline).
- A month supply of any medications the dog is taking for chronic conditions.
- A week's supply of food.
- A collar and 6 ft leash.
- Any transitional items such as toys you want to send with them.
- Your telephone number or email address in case they have questions.
- Tell them you will contact them the following day by phone.
- A representative from Golden Retriever Rescue of Southern Maryland will contact them in a couple of days to see how things are going.

A copy of the adoption contract follows. It, along with the check, should be sent to:

GRRSM
PO BOX 6
Great Mills, MD 20692



GOLDEN RETRIEVER RESCUE OF SOUTHERN MARYLAND, INC. ADOPTION AGREEMENT

This Adoption Agreement (“Agreement”), effective on _____ (date), is between Golden Retriever Rescue of Southern Maryland, Inc., (“Rescue”) and _____ (“Adopter”), whose home address is _____.

This Agreement states the terms under which Rescue will provide and Adopter will accept a dog for adoption. Adopter and Rescue, intending to be legally bound, agree as follows:

1. Since a dog may come from an unknown genetic background, the Adopter agrees that Rescue shall not be liable for any medical conditions that may affect the dog, including but not limited to, eyes, hips, heart, allergies, or any other medical or temperament problems. Adopter acknowledges that the dog is provided **AS IS AND WITHOUT WARRANTY OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE OR ANY OTHER WARRANTY, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED.**
2. The Adopter shall provide the dog with humane care and maintain it in accordance with all the current and future state, county and municipal laws and ordinances where the Adopter resides. The Adopter shall obtain the appropriate license(s) for the dog in accordance with such laws and ordinances.
3. The Adopter shall provide the dog with necessary veterinary care as needed for sickness, disease, injury, or aging. The Adopter shall also provide a veterinarian visit for the dog at least annually for a health examination, recommended vaccinations, rabies vaccination as required by law, heartworm test and prescribed preventative, fecal parasite test, and any other treatment as necessary.
4. The Adopter shall provide the dog with a securely fenced yard or other humane means of exercise. The dog shall not be kept chained or tied out of doors or allowed to run at large, nor shall it be kept outside while the residence is unoccupied.
5. If for any reason the dog cannot reside with the Adopter, the Adopter must return it to Rescue. The dog shall **NOT** be given away, sold or exchanged without the prior written permission of Rescue. In the event of the Adopter’s death, the dog shall be returned to Rescue or to an approved adoptive family.
6. The dog shall reside at and live inside the Adopter’s dwelling.
7. The Adopter shall keep the dog as a household pet and shall not use it as a guard dog, hunting dog, or any other type of service dog.
8. The Adopter shall ensure the dog wears an identification tag at all times and shall provide a collar for the dog to wear at all times when allowed outdoors.
9. The Adoption fee is non-refundable.

10. Adopter agrees to release, indemnify, hold harmless, and defend Rescue and its trustees, officers, employees, agents, and volunteers, whether current or former, from and against any and all claims or liabilities, including court costs and attorney's fees, arising out of Adopter's adoption and ownership of a dog provided by Rescue.

11. The Adopter consents to examination of the dog by Rescue during reasonable hours, with or without notice. The Adopter also consents to reclamation of the dog by Rescue at any time, with or without notice, for failure to comply with the terms of this Agreement or for any misrepresentation(s) made by the Adopter on the Adoption Application. In circumstances in which the health or life of the dog is not in immediate danger, the Adopter may be given a notice period with a reasonable opportunity to remedy any violations of the terms of the Agreement.

12. The Adopter agrees to pay Rescue any and all reasonable expenses, including court costs and attorney fees, incurred by Rescue to enforce the terms and provisions of this Agreement.

13. This Agreement shall be governed and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Maryland without reference to conflict of laws principles.

14. If a provision of this Agreement is found by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unenforceable, it shall not affect the other provisions, and this Agreement shall be construed as if such invalid or unenforceable provision were omitted.

AGREED TO AND ACCEPTED:

I (We) _____ the Adopter/s, enter into this Adoption Agreement and acknowledge receipt from Golden Retriever Rescue of Southern Maryland, Inc. of the dog named and described as:

Dog's ID# _____ Name _____ Age _____ Sex _____.

I (We) acknowledge having read and agree to abide by the provisions of the Adoption Agreement as set forth herein.

SIGNED _____ Date _____

SIGNED _____ Date _____

Street Address _____ City _____ State/Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Email _____

Driver's License Number _____ State _____

Golden Retriever Rescue of Southern Maryland, Inc. Volunteer Adoption Representative

Name _____ Date _____

Phone _____ Email _____

To Be Completed by the Golden Retriever Rescue of Southern Maryland, Inc. Representative

Adoption fee (\$250) received \$ _____ Additional Donation Received \$ _____

Total Amount Received \$ _____ Paid by: Cash or Check

Saying Farewell

Congratulations! You and the entire Golden Rescue of Southern Maryland, Inc. team have found a permanent, loving home for a golden in need. You were a big part of that as you loved your foster dog. There will be some dogs you are thrilled to see get adopted; and there will be others who you'll wished you'd kept. All will take a little piece of your heart....

“Little Pieces”

Melissa sat on the floor, unable to sit straight and tall like her mother had always admonished her to do when she was a child. Today, it would be impossible. And tomorrow...it probably wouldn't be possible then either. Her mind was too busy thinking about the dog that lay across her lap. When he came to be with her, he had no name. She remembered that day very well. The first sight of him was enough to break her heart into little pieces.

His fur was very thick; so thick that she had to wiggle her fingers down to feel his bony body. And as she pulled her fingers away again, they were coated in old dirt. Golden he was supposed to be. But on that day he was dirt and dust. He sat in the back of her car panting continuously, ears laid outward for he had lost his courage and couldn't keep them proud and tall.

He sat motionless, waiting and limp. But the thing that was the most disturbing was the look in his eyes. They were quiet eyes, sunken into his head - and they watched her. They were alive with thought. He was waiting for her to do something "to" him. Little did he know at the time that, instead, she would "give" something to him.

She gave him one of the little broken pieces of her heart. She reached out to stroke his head and he instinctively flinched his eyes shut and dropped his head, waiting for the heavy hand. With that little bit of movement she gave him another one of the broken pieces of her heart.

She took him home and gave him a bath. She toweled him dry and brushed some order back into his coat. For that, he was grateful and even though his own heart was loaded with worms, he accepted yet another piece of her heart, for it would help to heal his own.

"Would you like some water, big boy?" She whispered to him as she set down a large bowl of cold well water. He drank it up happily. He had been dehydrated for a long time and she knew it would take him most of the week to re-hydrate. He wanted more water - but it was gone. Ah... that's how it is, he thought to himself. But he was grateful for what he had been able to get. "Would you like some more?" and she gave him another bowl along with another little piece of her heart.

"I know that you are hungry. You don't have to find your own food anymore. Here's a big bowl of good food for you. I've added some warm water and a little piece of my heart."

Over the four months that he stayed with her, his health improved. The heart full of worms was replaced piece by piece with little bits of her loving heart. And each little piece worked a very special kind of magic. When the warmth of love and gentle caresses are added, the little broken pieces knit together again and heal the container it resides in. That container becomes whole again. She watched each little broken piece fill a gap in the gentle dog until his quiet eyes radiated the light from the little pieces. You see, kind words gently spoken turn the little pieces into illumination for the spirit that resides within.

He rested beside her, happy to be with her always. Never had he known such kindness, such gentle caresses; such love. His health had returned, his spirit was playful as a young dog's should be and he had learned about love.

Now his heart was full. The healing was complete. It was time to go. There was another person who had another heart that was meant to be shared with him. So she sat shapeless on the floor because all the broken pieces of her heart were with the dog. It is difficult to sit tall when your heart is not with you. She wrapped her arms around the dog that sat with tall, proud ears for her. Lean on me, he said. And

she gave him one last thing that would keep him strong; that would keep the pieces of her heart together long after he had gone on to live his new life. She gave him her tears and bound them to the pieces with a simple statement made from the ribbons of her heart.

"I love you, Buddy." And Buddy lived happily ever after.

Melissa sat on the floor, straight and tall like her mother had always admonished her to do when she was a child. Today, it would be possible. And tomorrow... it probably would be possible too. Because her mind was busy thinking about this, the next dog that lay across her lap.

Where did she get the heart to help yet another dog, you ask? Abhh... it came with the dog. They always bring a little bit of heart with them. And when the rescuer breathes in that little bit of heart, it quickly grows and fills the void left by the last dog.

Author Unknown

