

All for Their Better Life

The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.

Mahatma Gandhi

Jim and Mit Skinner of rural Paullina got involved with an adoption. It took no time for them to become deeply involved in the rescue to adoption process. The animal lovers joined Minnesota-Wisconsin Collie Rescue (MWCR) in December 2007. They adopted their first foster, coming very close to qualifying as "Foster Flunkies." A Foster Flunkie is an endearment given to fosterers who too often end

up adopting their fosters rather than allowing them to be adopted into approved homes. "I wasn't sure I could do it after the first one. I didn't think I could care for them and then give them up."

said Mit. She gave it a try and now Diego is their 10th foster in addition to 6 temporary fosters.

Membership to the MWCR is easy and inexpensive. Details and an

application form can be found online at www.mwcr.org or call the rescue line at 612-869-0480. Membership does not require fostering or adopting. The MWCR is a tax-deductible charitable organization structured with a board of directors and run entirely by volunteers.

The MWCR was founded in 2001 with 2 members. Today, 203 members live in 16 states and Canada.

There are many different roles Collie lovers can accept in the rescue mission of lost, abandoned or abused Collies within this organization. Jim and Mit have become very active in the fostering part. Fostering is an intervention for Collies taken out of difficult circumstances. It is a stage of security and safety in which the animals are given love and care, while they are brought to a stage ready for adoption. Some animals, such as Diego need recuperation from medical conditions. Diego has a genetic eye condition that is currently undergoing treatment. Jim and Mit also have 3 collies as their own.

Some rescued animals need intensive nurturing; perhaps they suffer from extreme fear or have severe physical needs. Those animals need to be socialized or regain health. There is no limit to the kind of care these beautiful animals might need, but the fosters, there are 28 foster teams in the MWCR, provide what is needed to prepare these dogs to become great pets.

The adoption process is thorough. The MWCR has very specific requirements in order to be considered to adopt a collie from them, including home inspections from a foster. Jim and Mit conduct home visits. The fosterers have the final say. And if an applicant has any kind of history unkind to animals, its over right there.

Things in the MWCR happen fast. Whatever bureaucracy might exist, it doesn't stall anywhere. An animal in need may be

called in to the Rescue line and regularly within 24 hours an animal in need is in good hands. It may be in transit from one state to another; it may be in temporary foster care or in permanent foster care. Registered foster homes are all throughout the upper midwest. There are 75 in all with 21 currently active. Those homes are located in Illinois, 4; Iowa, 6; Michigan, 2; Minnesota, 20; Kansas, 2; Missouri, 1; Alabama, 1; North Dakota, 1; and Wisconsin, 38.

Once a call comes in, volunteers move into action. Transportation and placement coordinators make phone calls that mobilized foster teams. It is quite common for a collie to be transported across several states by several volunteers until it can be delivered safely to its foster home.

Fosterers make enormous commitments to these collies - mostly in the form of love and time. MWCR pays for the veterinary evaluations and care the must come first in a rescue. Fosterers pay for food and treats. And they sometimes travel. The Skinners logged over 4000 miles during 2008 in a quest to make it a little better for some collies. Not a high price for such a great result.

Since the inception of MWCR nearly 8 years ago 673 Collies have been placed in "Forever Homes." Eight of those were pairs adopted into the same home. One notable couple was the Cat & Collie who became very attached and were placed together. MWCR is also responsible for the adoption of 1 sterer. So far in 2009, 90 collies have found homes. "It's the economy," both Jim and Mit say almost simultaneously. People with pets are finding themselves unable to afford them anymore, or they are forced to move into a home in which a collie pet is unacceptable.

Visiting with Mit & Jim about the rescue program took far more time than planned. They shared stories of these animals and the adventures of the

rescue missions. They shared stories of the generosity of the collie-loving community. But mostly their passion for this calling is compelling.

To read some of the stories go to www.mwcr.org. At present 12 collies' stories are online. Nine are being evaluated. There are 21 presently in foster care with MWCR.

A benefit to raise money for MWCR is planned for Saturday, August 22 at Pair-A-Dice South in Paullina. The benefit includes a meat cook off and evening entertainment by "The Show." If for no other reason come to hear all the jaw-dropping stories of the collies, and in one particular case, a family of retrievers, rescued or assisted by the Skinners.



Diego. Diego is a Collie found loose and without tags, but in good general health. Diego is the current foster of Jim and Mit Skinner.