



# Puppy Love

THREE LOCAL FAMILIES SHARE THEIR "LOVE STORIES" WITH THE DOGS THEY RESCUED

BY DIANA LaCHANCE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC SCHULTZ



## PEARL

Belinda Wright never planned to adopt a dog. She already had three sons and two cats, on top of a busy schedule. But in the summer of 2009, shortly before her oldest son started high school, she says he came to her with an ultimatum.

"He said, 'Mom, you are going to regret that you never let me have a dog while I was growing up.' So while I went to work,

all three boys began visiting local shelters and animal rescue agencies searching for a dog," says Wright.

It couldn't be just any dog, however.

"I gave them three criteria," she says. "The dog had to be a rescue, the dog had to be female, and the dog had to be an adult." They ended up getting two out of the three when they adopted a female lab mix puppy from A New Leash on Life Inc., a non-profit Huntsville-based animal rescue. But even though Pearl wasn't an adult, says Wright, "she impressed me with her calm disposition. I knew right away she would do well in our home with all the rambunctiousness of my boys."

And, she adds, "we all thought she was just incredibly cute!"

Today, Pearl is a full-fledged and beloved member of the Wright family.

"She fits our family so well – when we are active, she's active, and when we're not, she's not," says Wright, who adds that Pearl is also "an awesome protector."

When the boys start wrestling, she says, "Pearl promptly stands in front of them and barks until they stop. When they do, she quietly goes back to her previous business."

And as for that calm disposition? Well, just wait until the band starts up.

"We found out by accident that she loves to 'sing' when we play our child-sized accordion," says Wright, of her otherwise very dignified dog. "It is so funny!"



## SUMMER

Jacob Coil wisely began his petition for a dog by starting small – very small.

"He asked me to come to PetSmart to look at a lizard," says his mother, Laura Coil. But when she agreed, he showed her Summer instead, a shepherd mix puppy up for adoption from A New Leash on Life, Inc.

Coil held her ground. "I looked at her and she was cute, but I said, 'No,

we're too busy,'" she says. Fast-forward two weeks and three visits later and Jacob had his dog. "I finally gave in and said, 'If she's still there, it must be fate. It's meant to be,'" says Coil.

But while it may have been fate that Summer was still available, there was never any doubt that the family would rescue a dog when the time came.

"We did the breeder thing once before, but there's so many dogs out there that need homes," says Coil. "And I love the program that she came from."

Coil's husband Scott, meanwhile, liked that Summer was a shepherd mix, which he says ensured "there had to be something smart about her."

Indeed, in just the few short months they've had her, Summer is already proving to be a quick learner.

"The kids both have loft beds, so in the morning I'll say 'Go get Jacob' and she will go in and bark at him to get up," says Coil.

She also knows all of her basic commands. And while Summer is as energetic – and mischievous – as you might expect for a teenager, Scott says he can see her mellowing into "a good fireplace dog when she gets older."

And even Laura would have to agree that might make a better family portrait than a lizard.



## MILO, LEOPOLD, LEXI, MACY, EMMA AND ZOE

Lisa McClelland isn't your typical foster mom. After all, she already has four kids, three dogs, two gerbils and a tank full of fish. But somehow she's always able to make room for a few more mouths to feed. In this case, it's six daschund mix puppies: Milo, Leopold, Lexi, Macy, Emma and Zoe.

"I'm the only one who fosters mama dogs and their puppies for [Owens Crossroads based] Rhonda's Rescue," says McClelland, "so when the Guntersville Animal Shelter called the rescue and asked them to take the puppies, they came to me."

As with any litter, the first few days were the most critical.

"You have to make sure everyone is getting milk around the clock, which means getting up in the night," says McClelland. "You also have to make sure the mom is getting enough nutrition, and you have to get rid of any parasites that come with them."

If it sounds like a lot of work, it is. But it also comes with a lot of joy, says McClelland.

"It's incredible to see the mothers give birth and then take care of those puppies. They don't have a handbook – they just do it."

Now those once-tiny puppies are frisky toddlers, ready for adoption. They're all cute, of course. But they're also different.

"Milo is really mellow," says McClelland. "He likes to just sit and look at you, whereas Emma is always the first one up to greet you." Lexi loves her sleep – "She's healthy, but she's lazy!" – and Leopold is the brave adventurer, while Macy prefers snuggling to playing. And Zoe?

"She's the crybaby," says McClelland. "There's always one!"

As for McClelland, the only thing she wants in return is "awesome families, maybe with kids or grandkids" for the puppies. Then maybe a break.

Or maybe not.

"Only God knows," she says. "He always brings me whoever needs to be here." ❁

## THINKING ABOUT A POOCH OF YOUR OWN?

You can learn more about adopting one of the daschund puppies by visiting [www.PetFinder.com](http://www.PetFinder.com) or contacting Rhonda's Rescue at 256-200-2094 or [rescuedogs4u@yahoo.com](mailto:rescuedogs4u@yahoo.com).

You can learn more about adopting from A New Leash on Life, Inc. by visiting [www.anewleash.org](http://www.anewleash.org).