

LAKE PLACID NEWS

ROTARY CLUB NEWS: Rotary learns about freeing the beagles



Below is a picture of Nikki with her new pal Mabel about to take her outside for her first time. (Provided photo)

The Rotary Club of Lake Placid regularly has speakers at our weekly virtual meetings, and recently we were presented with a very moving talk by Joe Tastrom about the Beagle Freedom Project.

Tastrom, Zooming from Syracuse, explained to us just what BFP is, why they exist and how we can help their mission.

Q: What is the Beagle Freedom Project?

A: We learned that many labs, industries and even some universities are still using dogs and cats to test pharmaceuticals, household products, veterinary procedures, and even cosmetics. In fact, over 60,000 dogs are used annually. Although some of this work, such as veterinary purposes and medical advances, can seem necessary, other tests are done simply for liability purposes as no new knowledge or benefit is gained. BFP does not condone this, but nor do they actively battle the labs, other groups are already doing that. BFP was formed to receive the animals once the labs are done with them.

Q: Why beagles & why rescue?

A: The vast majority of animals that are used this way are beagles. Their docility, size and demeanor work against them in making them ideal lab inhabitants. Unfortunately, the normal course of business had been — and still is in places — to euthanize the dogs once they no longer serve that purpose. This is typically done at 4 to 6 years old.

BFP has an established agreements with many of these labs and institutions that BFP will now come and take the dogs, no fee, no questions, no accusations of cruelty. They simply remove the animals and then work to find homes for them. Some labs initially balked, saying that the animals were not suitable as pets.

Beagle Freedom simply said, *“that will be our problem, let us worry about that.”* This is how Tastrom became involved; he started out as a foster parent for a beagle, until such time that the dog was acclimated to the non-sterile real world and a new owner was ready to take the dog.

Imagine — these dogs, 4 and 5 years old, have never seen grass, felt the sun, nor played with either a person or other dog. They don't even have names.

I was present at one of these “*releases*,” and it is an amazing thing to see. Sadly, Joe became a failure as a foster parent. His family now has four beagles who call their house home. Looks like they do indeed make fine companions.

BFP also relocates animals trained as special needs animals whose human partner has passed and the animal then placed into a shelter. They also rescue cats, birds, and even equines.

Their motto is “*Rescue. Rehab. Repeat.*”

Q: How can we help?

A: We were informed that there are many ways to help this unique organization — whether it be monetary donations, contacting our political leaders to pass legislation mandating that labs first seek this avenue before euthanasia, or getting personally involved. They are always looking for people to transport animals, foster animals, or permanently adopt. Know that fostering can be trying, many are not well house-trained and some have emotional issues. However, these issues are usually mitigated or eliminated through patience and affection. More information can be found at BFP.org.

(Sean Donovan is a member of the Rotary Club of Lake Placid.)
