

FINDING A COMPANION AND SAVING A LIFE ©

By Catherine Wolfe, Lawyer

When looking for a dog consider adopting one from a rescue league, a humane society or a "dog pound." Many times wonderful dogs end up in those places due to bad luck such as the death or relocation of their guardian (formerly referred to as "owner"¹). Dogs like that are often the "perfect pet" because someone else has already done all the hard work such as housebreaking and socializing them so all you need to do is adopt them. Many times they are even obedience trained.

Unfortunately, many people feel they *must* have a puppy so that they can "make it mine." The fact is that you can make a dog of any age "yours" providing that the dog has the personality trait that allows him or her to form strong bonds with people. I know this from experience. Have adopted dogs as old as 12 and had them bond so strongly with me that other people were astonished to find out that I had not raised them from puppyhood. And, the reverse is true. I have known people who have raised their dogs from puppyhood and you would never have guessed it because the dog had little bond to its guardian. This all goes to show that the important element in finding a companion dog is not the age of the dog but rather its ability to bond with people.

I learned this years ago when I went to adopt an old dog from a humane society. A humane society employee recommended a particular dog but I was very concerned because the dog was so already strongly bonded to her (in fact, when she went to leave the room the dog wrapped its front legs around her waist and was clutching her). I thought that such a strong bond would preclude the dog from bonding to anyone else. Fortunately I expressed that concern to the employee who explained that the situation is really the reverse - that if a dog bonds strongly with one person it will bond just as strongly with other people and that has proven true throughout my life. So, if you want a wonderful companion without all of the work of a puppy, consider adopting an older dog (over 1 year old) from a rescue league, a humane society or a "dog pound."

Also, rescue leagues, humane societies and "dog pounds" tend to be very knowledgeable about dogs and can help you select a dog that is well-suited as a companion in your particular circumstances. And, for those who absolutely have to have a designer dog (a purebred), there are rescue leagues for all breeds of dogs.

A good place to start when you are looking for dog is the internet. Many rescue leagues, humane societies and "dog pounds" now have websites with pictures of the dogs available for adoption, along with information about their disposition, health, likes, dislikes, etc. If you are looking for a particular organization you can do a search based on the name and if you are looking for a particular breed of dog you can type in the name of the breed and then the word "rescue." For instance, when I was looking for a

¹ I am of the belief that people cannot **own** another living being - it would like saying one owns one's child. Instead of owning our pets (and children) we are blessed to be their stewards for the time they are under our care.

Chihuahua I typed in "Chihuahua Rescue" and got wonderful results. If you are looking for a small dog and do not care about its breed you could type in "small dog rescue" and if you are looking for a large dog you could type in "large dog rescue." One of the best sites is petfinder.com.

Most shelters and humane societies have "wish lists" that you can get on so that when the kind of dog you are looking for comes in they will notify you. Also, most shelters and humane societies have a book that lists all of the purebred rescue leagues and are happy to share that information.

Best of all, when you adopt a dog from a rescue league, a humane society or a "dog pound" you save a life - and what could be better than that?