

## **Consider becoming a foster home for a homeless dog**

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<http://www.examiner.com/x-2111-Tacoma-Dogs-Examiner~y2008m12d22-The-winwin-of-fostering-a-rescue-dog>

Most people are aware of the sad over-population of dogs and many voice their desire to adopt a dog or puppy from a shelter or rescue group. However, not everyone knows that they can become a foster parent to one of these dogs in need.

Shelters are highly stressful for dogs of all breeds. The incessant barking, sterile cement runs, unfamiliar smells and lack of the traditional comforts of home create stress and fear in those unfortunate dogs who have found themselves in the midst of the shelter system. Shelters provide a necessary service by taking dogs off of the street and getting them altered, but foster homes go one step further by taking the dogs out of the shelter facility and into a home setting.

Foster homes provide an excellent opportunity for unwanted dogs. While in foster care, their true personality is allowed to emerge and they can be better evaluated for appropriate placement in their forever home. Proper placement equates to higher success rates for long term placement, and the odds of the dogs landing back in a shelter situation are decreased. In the meantime, the lucky dog who is able to enter a foster home gets to enjoy the benefits of being a part of a family. Typically, they will learn some basic obedience and appropriate house manners while in foster care, again, improving their chance of successful placement at the time of adoption.

I have personally dealt with dogs in foster care over the past several years. I have fostered many dogs myself, as well as having facilitated the foster care of dogs into new foster homes. The primary concern that I hear repeatedly is "I will get too attached and I won't be able to let the dog go to a new home". I try to remind people that if they fall in love with their foster dog, they can usually adopt their foster themselves, so it's a no-harm, no-foul situation. I did adopt my first foster dog and she is a joy to have in my life. But I have fostered many, many dogs since her and I know that those dogs are with fabulous families now because they had a chance to be fostered outside of a shelter facility. There is a tremendous amount of satisfaction that comes from fostering a dog and watching it blossom with love, security and care. The dogs that have found themselves homeless are most often amazing companions who just need to find their place with a family willing to give them a chance.

To find out about shelters and rescues in your area that are looking for foster homes, visit <http://www.Petfinder.com> and search Shelters/Rescues by your zip code. Most often, a website will be provided where you can find out how to go about becoming a foster family for a homeless dog. Be open to the process that the shelter and/or rescue has in place for determining the best dog for your family. Various

circumstances such as other pets, children and a fenced yard, must be taking into consideration for the best, and safest, placement of the foster dog.

Fostering is not the easiest thing to do, but it is highly rewarding. I encourage you to take the chance on a dog who needs a family; perhaps just one time, hopefully many. I have seen many dogs that would have been euthanized if a foster home was not available, and every one of those dogs has been extraordinary. Please visit a shelter or find a local rescue and see how you can help, you won't be sorry.

## Who is right for fostering?

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I get asked this fostering question all of the time also. I like to think that there are three types of people that fostering is great for. The first is the dog lover who is horrified by the dogs dying in shelters and who wants to do **SOMETHING**, anything to help. This person can make a huge difference in the life of the dog that they foster AND help another dog make it out of the shelter alive.

The second person who is ideal for fostering is the one who has a "complete" dog family. In other words, they are not looking for another dog and are happy with their current situation. You are less likely to be tempted to keep your foster dog if you are happy with the way that your household is. Also, you are helping another dog make it to their forever family and can feel great about your part in the process.

The third individual ideal for fostering is the person considering adding a second or third dog to their family. What better way to pick a companion than to "test-drive" them in your own household? If you find a dog that fits your family's dynamics perfectly, then you adopt. If the dog isn't perfect at your home, you can keep him/her until they meet the family that HAS the perfect dynamics. Again, feeling good about your part in the process and helping save a life in your quest for the perfect companion. I'm a combination of all three - horrified by the dying at shelters, 99% content with my dog family, but possibly looking for that perfect dog out there - he or she is out there waiting for me, but I can help many others in the interim.

For any of you who **HAVE** adopted a rescue dog, please consider for a moment that someone fostered YOUR dog at one point in time and gave him/her a chance to find YOU! Remember, pay it forward!!