

SUMMIT TEACHER RECOGNIZED FOR SAVING NEARLY 200 RESCUE DOGS

Submitted by Matthew Holowienka

When Summit resident Kristine Duetsch first began researching Home for Good Dog Rescue at the end of 2016, she had done so for one reason; to potentially adopt a rescue animal into her home.

However, after rearranging her dining room table, designating the room a “puppy area” and deciding to take a chance on touching even more lives, she and her family have personally housed nearly 200 deserving dogs over the last 14 months as part of the Berkeley Heights-based non-profit’s unprecedented foster program.

“I wanted to adopt, and my husband said: ‘No, we are not adopting,’” Duetsch explained. “And I said, ‘Well, can we foster then?’”

And while the Duetsches have opened their home to animals of all ages since joining Home for Good Dog Rescue over one year ago, they have since specialized in providing foster care to pregnant and nursing mother dogs and their young puppies.

“My husband came home that first day, and I said, ‘Yep, there are a quite a few puppies in there,’” Duetsch said, recalling the first litter she ever brought home. “He opened up the door and got tackled on the 40-yard line.”

As Duetsch described, Home for Good Dog Rescue is a 100-percent foster-based organization dedicated to rescuing animals from high-kill shelters throughout South Carolina and Georgia, nurturing them at their rescue property in Aiken, South Carolina, and finally transporting them northward for adoption.

None of its dogs spend time in a shelter or kennel environment in New Jersey. Rather, they live with volunteer families like the Duetsches, with whom they enjoy all the benefits of domestic life prior to placement in a permanent home.

“Fostering litters is so fulfilling because you get to see these little munchkins grow from itty bitty helpless creatures that rely solely on mom for their every need to these happy rambunctious, chubby little angels,” Duetsch said.

“When Home for Good Dog Rescue commits to an animal, we commit to the entire family,” Richard Errico, Home for Good Dog Rescue’s Co-Founder and Treasurer, explained. “When we pull a puppy from a shelter, we pull all of its siblings and its parents, whenever they are available. For that reason, Kristine and her family have been invaluable to our mission.”

“We realize that we can save more lives fostering than we can by adopting a dog, and it’s a great teaching moment for my children,” Duetsch continued. “They went into their classrooms with pamphlets, and they talked about what we do and what we need.”

She recalled how one of her family’s younger members, Ava, 8, even sought donations for Home for Good Dog Rescue in lieu of gifts for her birthday in 2017.

“She realized the opportunity that we have to help these dogs,” Duetsch said. “She accepted toys, food, and cleaning products, and she felt very special.”

And as Duetsch described, her work as a foster parent for Home for Good has truly allowed her and her family to connect with their neighbors as ambassadors for animal rescue.

“Every day, when I pick up my kids from school, I bring a puppy,” she said. “And that’s how we have gotten a lot of our dogs adopted. Everywhere we go, we wear our Home for Good shirts. The day these pups get adopted, we feel such a huge sense of accomplishment and are so proud that we are making a difference.”

Since its inception in 2010, Home for Good Dog Rescue has adopted nearly 300 dogs into homes throughout Summit, NJ. About a quarter of the nearly 6000 animals it has saved in the last 7 years have found permanent families in a Union County town.

However, the Duetsch family’s connection to Summit goes back much longer.

“My husband, Thomas Duetsch’s, family goes back about a hundred years living in Summit,” Kristine, a Philadelphia native, said. “His mother

taught in Summit for twenty-five years, and his brother, Tim Duetsch, is a Summit firefighter.”

As she recalled, Kristine herself initially came to the area by accident, having stopped into the Summit Fire Department to ask directions in the middle of a blood drive.

There, she met one of the event’s organizers, Sheila Duetsch, her future mother-in-law, who is known locally for her work as a teacher and for her ongoing involvement with the Summit Historical Society.

“We got to talking, and we had so much in common. Her father was a cop. My father was a cop. She’s a teacher. I’m a teacher. She took my number,” Duetsch explained. “And, yes, I donated blood.”

And for the past 15 years, Kristine Duetsch herself, a science specialist, has remained driven not only to impacting her community through her rescue work, but also as an educator.

“I taught in Summit at the middle school and also at Jefferson School,” she said. “Now, my baby’s in kindergarten, so it’s going to soon be time for me to go back to the classroom.”

On March 3 of this year, Home for Good Dog Rescue recognized Duetsch and her family at its annual “Taste of Italy” Spaghetti & Meatballs Dinner and Tricky Tray by presenting them with the Choudhuri Award, which emphasizes a New Jersey family’s contributions to the organization’s foster program.

The award is named for the Choudhuri family of Berkeley Heights, NJ, who have worked with Home for Good’s foster program since 2012 to save the lives of hundreds of dogs and puppies.

“One by one, we are responsible for saving the lives of those that do not have a voice or a choice,” Duetsch said. “I now have a sense of purpose and passion that I have been searching for.”

For more information on Home for Good Dog Rescue, to inquire about adoption, or to become a supporter, volunteer, or foster family, visit HomeforGoodDogs.org.

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(above, l-r) Emma Duetsch, 5, and sister Ava Duetsch, 8, collected donations in lieu of gifts for Ava's birthday and presented them to Home for Good Dog Rescue.



(above, l-r) Ava Duestch, 8; Kristine Duetsch; Emma Duetsch, 5; and Thomas Duetsch recieved the Choudhuri Award in recognition for their contributions to Home for Good Dog Rescue's foster program in March 2018.



(above) Kristine Duetsch welcomed this foster puppy as it was flown to New Jersey on a volunteer rescue flight in 2017.

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