



# The Sheltie Spin

Newsletter of Northern Virginia Sheltie Rescue  
"Giving Shelties a New Leash on Life"

WINTER 2023



A lovely memory of all those Robertson Shelties!



The "Nutcracker Shelties"

Wello, Sheltie friends! Welcome to our December *Sheltie Spin*! It's been a very busy and challenging year for us and we have lots of news inside. We had two intakes of multiple, very needy dogs and lots of other intakes.

We met many adopters who happily took home their "new" Sheltie, and we kept in touch with adopters from previous years. We even had a picnic – finally – after too many years without that fun event.

This is a big *Spin* issue with two long articles you'll enjoy reading. We also have news from many of our adopted dogs, some information about canine health, and also what our volunteers are doing in whatever spare time they might have. So, get a cup of hot chocolate, invite your Sheltie up on the sofa, and read about lots of very lucky Shelties.



Santa and Cady



Bentley Hendrix



## The “Northumberland Dogs”: A Huge Challenge for NVSR

There are far too many stories about dogs being mistreated and abused; and many of them do not have happy endings. The story of what we, at Northern Virginia Sheltie Rescue (NVSR), refer to as our Northumberland dogs is a mixed but mostly happy story.

The story began when Lisa Fox, who spearheads our foster and adoption program, saw a news article about a raid on a Northumberland County breeder. 58 dogs were seized. Some dogs were Shelties, so it caught her attention. Animal Control took the dogs to the Northumberland Animal Shelter, a small rural Virginia shelter already full with 32 dogs. Understaffed and underfunded, the shelter appealed for help to the community, which donated dog food and volunteered to help deal with the explosion from 32 to 90 dogs.

Lisa offered the shelter NVSR’s help. Although no dogs could be released until legal custody issues were resolved, NVSR agreed to take the 8 Shelties and Sheltie mixes. NVSR sent \$2,000 to the shelter to help defray food and vet costs while the dogs languished in the shelter for several months. Meanwhile, we learned that the dogs were very unsocialized; they had never been in a home, never worn a collar, were not housetrained, and all had some level of fear. The “breeder” had kept them in a filthy field and put down a huge bowl of cheap food for the whole group to share. Four of “our” dogs were heartworm positive and would need to undergo the grueling 3-month heartworm treatment.

When the dogs were finally released, the complicated logistics began. Lisa identified NVSR foster homes throughout Virginia, all far from the shelter. After foster providers were assigned for each dog, she recruited volunteers to transport the 8 dogs. A crate, collar and leash were needed for each dog, and three cars headed for the shelter one Saturday morning in May.

Transport volunteers, Louise Kenny, Theresa Jackson and Lisa Fox, discovered a group of terribly fearful, almost feral little dogs. Getting them into collars and leashes, then into crates, was more challenging than anticipated. Goodbyes were finally said to the very grateful shelter workers, and the NVSR team headed off to deliver the 8 dogs to their foster parents: Melinda McKenzie Hall, Mary Mounts, Linda Falck, Linda Lott, Janet Knotts, Mike O’Shea, Theresa Jackson and Marta Miranda. NVSR finally had legal possession of the dogs and could begin the difficult process of trying to socialize dogs that were terrified of everything they encountered in their foster homes. Two more foster moms, Melody Goins and Donna Martin, later stepped up to foster two of the more challenging dogs that required special environments.

The two females had experienced more human handling due to puppy production, so they were somewhat less fearful. The six males were completely undomesticated, unwilling to be touched, hid in their crates, resisted leashes, and might bite if picked up. None of their foster parents had experienced such severely unsocialized dogs. Lisa and other NVSR volunteers provided extensive guidance. In addition, NVSR spent nearly **\$15,000** for medical expenses.

Six dogs are “works in progress” and their own reports follow! Two of the dogs’ stories were cut short.





**GRADY:** Hi, my name is Grady a/k/a Houdini a/k/a Sir Barks-a-Lot. I got to my foster home (the Lady and Mr. Man) in May. I am still there due to some health issues, continued work on socialization and learning not to be so afraid of everything. The Lady says I'm a gem hidden beneath a ton of gunk, whatever that means.



When I first came, I didn't know what to make of these people. I would not come to them, bucked like a bronco on a leash, and I did not want to be touched. They put my crate on a wagon and wheeled me into the backyard. I liked being chauffeured around.

The Lady and Mr. Man have been very patient with me. I can walk on a leash and enjoy short walks in quiet areas. I take cues from my foster siblings but still don't want to follow some of the rules. I get food on a regular basis now, but I'm not gaining weight. We're working on that, and I hope to feel better soon.

I found the oddest places to hide: behind the crate, under the wood rack, between the fences at the back of the yard. If it's narrow, I get in there! The Lady says (with a British accent) I'm wiry. I like to make them look for me and – dang it – they always find my hiding places. She laughs, calls me Houdini, takes pictures and then they get me out, even if it requires a screwdriver to take stuff apart. I'm the first one up in the morning, ready for my breakfast so I tell them to get a move on. They are helping me learn that life can be good and not all people are scary. The Lady says slow and steady wins the race and calls me a turtle! I saw one of those walking across the road and I don't look anything like that! Here I am in my winter sweater.



**INDIE:** Hello all, Indie here. I have quite a tale to tell! I was taken from horrible surroundings and put in a cage at a shelter where I got some good food and lots of tests – one showed I had heartworms and parasites. Then, a nice lady put me in a small crate. We traveled a while, then my crate went to another vehicle. Next thing, I stopped moving and my crate was on the floor in a strange place with the door open. No way was I going to leave that crate! Two hands cuddled me and took me out of the little crate, and I was carried to a very large crate with a big soft pad. I really liked this one – safe and warm.



After a few days, my new person crawled into the crate and took me out. The person was very good to me and put really good food out for me twice a day. I had more tests, found out I had bad teeth and a urinary tract infection. Then the person started putting this long ropey thing on me, which I really didn't like. We went to a thing called Scottish Games and when the person put the ropey thing on me, I decided it wasn't too bad. I walked around greeting



*continued next page*



people who said I was “cute.” That person is now my favorite thing, and I don’t let him get too far away. I am now healthy with no heartworms, and I decided to stay in this nice place.

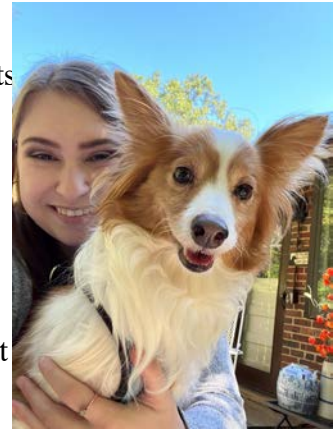
**CATO/KIERAN:** My name was Kieran, but now it’s Cato. My foster mom is writing this because my paws get stuck in the keys. For the first 5 years of my life I existed with 57+ other dogs in a field – a puppy mill. Minimal lousy food, minimal lousy shelter, minimal lousy vet care ... AND NO ATTENTION OR LOVE!



At my foster home, I was 12 lbs. of fear, although I am gosh darn cute! I would eat only when foster mom was out of sight, hid in my crate, hated to go outside, avoided any touch, had bad teeth and a bad case of worms. After a few months, I started to prance around when meals were prepared. Then, I started to go out of my crate on my own! I also have a lots of vocalizations! When foster mom

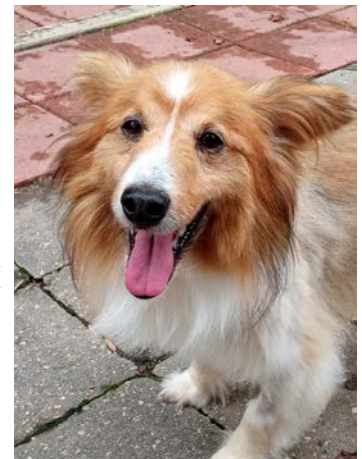
came home I'd bark, I'd howl to get her up. In the dark I'd have a low growl.

Now I live in West Virginia with my forever mom Maddie and Jax (another Sheltie). I sleep with her, and I don’t go near my crate if I can help it. I really love Maddie. I let her touch me all she wants, but not cut my nails. I have a ton of toys that I guard from Jax. I take all my toys into Mom’s bed, but she doesn’t like that. She says the bed is for sleeping, but it’s for playing.



**NIKKI/NIALL:** Hello everyone. I’m Nikki (my former name was Niall). Although I prefer to be known for something else, I am the only Northumberland dog who was shaved to the skin by the shelter. My hair is growing back, and I will be even cuter when it gets fuller!!!

When I came to live with my family, I was very scared and stayed in an x-pen or crate. Slowly I felt comfortable with my mom and she was able to walk me in the yard with a harness. I was easily scared. My mom and I are very close, and she is my person. Even though my dad works hard to take care of me, feed me and give me yummy treats, I still bark at him. I love to sit on the sofa with Mom at night but if she gets up, I follow her. If I walk by dad, I growl at him. My mom tells me that I am so sweet, and I run and play around the yard, but I want her and no one else. I am so lucky that they are patient with me, and I hope I will trust my dad and other people as much as I trust my mom.







**SHEILA:** Hi, I am Sheila. I am 3-5 years old and have had at least one litter of puppies. My parents are Papillons and 2 of my grandparents are Shelties. In May I came to my forever home. For about a week I stayed mostly in my crate and got lots of treats to help me feel comfortable. My new mom would slowly reach into my crate to touch me, which doesn't faze me now, but then it freaked me out. Outside, I would lie next to a tree and hear birds, which I was used to. I didn't know how to sleep through the night, eat at mealtimes,

potty outside or walk on a leash; but within 2 months I was in a routine. I am also learning to be alone. I love people and if I am alone for too long, I freak out, so I need a doggie sitter.

I also didn't realize how sick I was with heartworms. My family was terrified (although they didn't think I knew) and were very careful about keeping me calm. So many people at NSVR and our vet's office helped us through, and the worms are now all gone!

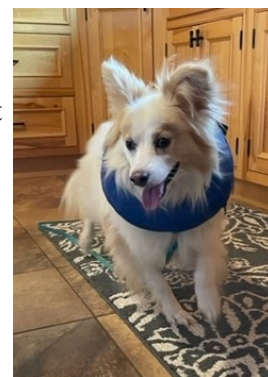
I would have never imagined my life would be like this! I get fed, walked, and get LOTS of love and attention. I feel like NOW is when my real journey starts.



**KEEGAN:** Keegan here! I'm one of 8 very lucky dogs that NVSR saved from a terrible no-good lady. I went to stay with my first foster parents, but I was too afraid of everything, especially the humans and their talking and trying to touch me. They had no fenced yard and I was afraid of a leash, so it was too hard for them to help me.

When I got to my second foster home I thought "Oh, no! MORE HUMANS!" but here, at least, I could be outside with no one touching me and stay in a roomy x-pen. Then the humans started sitting near me! Yikes! But they didn't look at me or talk. I tried to be brave and not hide in my crate. I finally got used to them. It took many weeks and lots of treats before I let them hook a leash on me. And a few more weeks later I was willing to walk on the leash.

My foster parents let me progress in my own time. But I still wouldn't let them pick me up or even touch me. I wanted to race around their big fenced yard, but I had heartworms and wasn't allowed to run. Months went by while I was treated for that and I realized the humans weren't so scary. Once the heartworms were gone, I raced around the big yard. My foster parents were really happy that I even let them touch me. They said I was turning into "a real dog." Now I'm healing from my neuter surgery, so no running for a little while. My Sheltie friend Sammy is helping me learn about the humans. My foster mom says I'm so smart and I would love agility. I don't know what that is, but if I can run and jump I'm all in.



*continued next page*

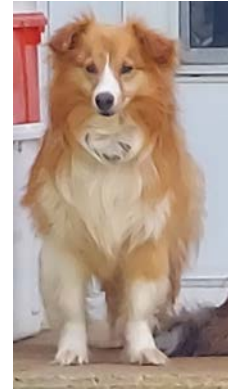


Most sadly, two of our dogs' journeys were cut short. One little male, **Murphy**, was particularly aggressive during his months in the shelter and repeatedly attacked his foster mom. After all attempts to work with him failed, it became clear that he would not be able to live safely with humans and NVSR sadly decided that he be euthanized.

**Sean**, the oldest dog, was in the worst condition: malnourished, very underweight, with hookworms and heartworms. The many scars on his face and torn ears were from competing for food. He had a serious untreated ear



infection and his ears were bloody from scratching them. Sean had trouble standing and walking and had to be carried from place to place. This was difficult because he was hand shy and flinched when touched. Melinda McKenzie Hall, his foster mom, had to go very slowly to approach or pick him up. Sean was a gentle soul, just learning about walks, good food, a loving touch and a safe haven. He died on July 3rd due to heart failure.



This story of love, compassion, and perseverance is what NVSR is all about. The stories of the "8" has been unusual because of the number of dogs that were brought in at once. The foster and forever families of these dogs have been relentless in their work with them, but it has taken a village. NVSR volunteers have been at their sides throughout this journey; and the countless volunteers who have taken care of equally challenging dogs have provided support and guidance. As the dogs who have been blessed to be a part of this organization would say, **"Thank you NVSR for not giving up on me and helping me live as a loved, healthy member of this family."**

\*\*\*\*\*

Final Note: And what happened to the breeder (Phyllis Swift) who subjected these and the other 50 dogs to such deplorable conditions? In April 2023 the Northumberland General District Court ruled in the civil portion of her trial that Swift did not adequately care for the animals and ordered her to pay over \$3200 to cover the cost of veterinary care and \$17,700 for the shelter's care. To date it appears this has not been paid.

Melinda McKenzie Hall represented NVSR at the criminal portion of the trial in October 2023, a long, emotional day. She witnessed a video showing conditions in which these poor dogs lived (cheap plastic dog igloos on wooden pallets, torn tarps over the pens, filthy water, dead mice). Phyllis Swift was found guilty of neglect and received a suspended 12-month jail sentence. She is banned for life from ever owning any companion animals. Unfortunately, the lifetime ban is jurisdictional. She could move to another state and start over again.



## NVSR Volunteer Spotlight – Martha Heisel

Interviewed by Melinda McKenzie Hall

**Hello, Martha - How long have you been with NVSR?** 20 memorable years!

**What inspired you to volunteer with NVSR?** In 2003, I had three Shelties: Zha Zha, Katie and Glacier (my heart dog), all from people who didn't want them. I realized that there were many Shelties out there that I could help, so I volunteered with NVSR. In two weeks I got my first foster dog, Frankie.

**What is your role?** President of the NVSR board of directors. **Has it changed over time?** Oh, yes...I started fostering, then coordinated home visits (we were taking in up to 90 dogs a year back then!), managed the application, intake and adoption process for a few years. I revised forms and procedures, started the e-newsletter and managed and wrote for our printed *Sheltie Spin*.

**What do you enjoy most about working with NVSR?** Being part of a mission that all our dedicated volunteers believe in. NVSR has made a difference in the lives of more than 1,400 dogs since 1999.

**How many dogs have you fostered or adopted in your lifetime?** 108 foster dogs, and I remember every single one. Seven of my foster dogs got to stay with me. I still have Max (9yo) and Skylar (12yo). (R-Me with Max, Skylar and Skip, who died July 2020)

**Any uniquely rewarding stories about them?** My very first foster dog, Frankie, was as charming as her adopters. Louie ... the couple who adopted and dearly loved him knew he wouldn't live many more years. Then they adopted two more Shelties. One was my last foster dog – named Frankie! Fate??

**How has your experience with NVSR influenced you as a dog owner today?** Although Shelties will always be special to me, my heart is with rescue itself. Every dog needs a loving home, from the tiny ones to the giant ones. I have high regard for shelter and rescue workers, all of whom have seen a lot of heartbreak, yet also have enabled many more happy connections.



**On a personal note...tell us something about yourself that our fellow volunteers would not have known: jobs, homes, hobbies, etc.** I grew up in the farm country of New Jersey with two horses and my dad's hunting dogs as pals. My husband and I were backpackers and took two years "off" in the mid-70s to explore the U.S. and Europe. Then we added Shelties Belle and Meggie to our life, hiking hundreds of miles with us. Rather than a "career," I had a series of very interesting jobs: fine arts librarian, landscape designer, ballroom and tap dance instructor, human resources leader and consultant, and dog trainer. Now, I work on community projects and support local artists. For a local newspaper, my last writing assignment was a skydiving adventure. Yahoo! Along with the delight I have in my dogs, I am a dancer and serious birder, enjoying the wonderful Shenandoah Valley.

**Note:** Martha will retire from NVSR at the end of December after 20 years rescuing Shelties. We know that whatever she takes on next will also be successful. Thanks for all you've done for NVSR!





## The Journey of Survival, a Community Rescue and a Circle of Perseverance and Love

By NVSR Foster Volunteer Mary Klein with Volunteers Susan Hendrix, John Marlette, Elaine Taylor, Nancy Tisdale, and Adopters Cynthia, Greg and Anne; photos by Mary Klein and Linda Hill.

The **Journey** began the busy week of April 3rd, 2023. Lisa Fox, NVSR Foster Coordinator, needed immediate help transporting and fostering two female puppies. (The owner wanted to keep a third puppy.) I agreed to foster them, but could not foster until Monday. On Friday these 7-month-old puppies were in immediate need of rescue from a very unfortunate situation. The owner was completely bedridden. All three puppies had been roaming wild inside the house with little or no food for several days. There were **THREE** puppies to foster, and I agreed to foster all three. (Phoebe, Poppy, and Heidi below).



The **Community Rescue** – Friday Susan and Cary Hendrix picked up the puppies. In Susan’s words...

*This was the worst surrender I’ve ever worked for NVSR. The home looked like an episode of the show “Hoarders.” Lisa told us to wear masks and old shoes, but I wasn’t prepared for what we encountered. Even with a mask, the foul stench of urine and feces burned my nostrils and eyes. It was so awful my husband gagged and retreated to the car. Lucky me. Due to no socialization and suspected mistreatment, I had to corner each one and put her in the crate in our vehicle. I still don’t know how I managed to side step all the poop. It was EVERYWHERE.*

*After some convincing, I got the owner’s signature, while she sobbed about having to surrender the pups. I knew these dogs would not survive if I didn’t get them out of there. It seemed like hours had passed, but it was only 20 minutes. I never felt so relieved to know we’d saved three precious lives.*

Since I could not foster the puppies until Monday, John Marlette graciously accepted the challenge....

*Susan and Cary arrived with three confused balls of black and white fluff. Despite months of neglect, deprivation and even torture, these girls had hope in their eyes and tails that would not stop wagging. Did they know their lives were about to get better? Or was it that persistent optimism of theirs that someday things would work out for them? Whatever it was, they vibrated with excitement and a little worry.*

*That first night they wolfed down their supper and settled into temporary quarters. Early the next morning they got their first taste of open, grassy space and they knew exactly how to use it. The three sisters ran, jumped, tumbled over each other until they could play no more. Nap time, more meals and more outdoor romps filled the weekend. Signs of their tortured past began to show in a limp here, a yelp there, and the awful specter of little Phoebe’s scalded paws. Neither pain nor scars dampened their joy.*





*On Monday April 10th, the three girls left for “fosterhood” with Mary and Bob Klein and all the things that some lucky dogs can take for granted but had not been part of the trio’s reality. They left a bleak past behind and embraced the love and attention that three beautiful Sheltie puppies so richly deserved.*

Elaine Taylor accepted the challenge for the next leg of the three sisters journey to the Klein home in the mountains south of Charlottesville. Elaine’s account....



*I enlisted the help of my friend, Ralph. He and John moved the big crate with three wide-eyed puppies in it to Ralph’s vehicle, and brought the girls to my house. When they raised the hatchback, the girls were curiously looking around to see where in the world they were now! (I took this photo.) I jumped in the car, and off we went. Once at the Kleins’ home, it took a little doing to slide the crate (dogs still inside) smoothly down the grassy slope to their back gate. Once the crate was inside, they quickly came out to explore their new home.*

**A Circle of Love** – Bob and I were somewhat overwhelmed with the arrival of Heidi (12 lbs.), Phoebe (8 lbs.) and Poppy (11 lbs). We kept them separated from our 12-year-old Farrah and 8-year-old Dakota because of potential parasites. We learned right away that they loved to play chase (at times too aggressively) and play with sticks and paper towel rolls. I had prepared crates, towels and feeding bowls. John said to feed them in crates because of their extreme survival instincts, especially Heidi. I needed to watch them closely because they had been competing with each other for food and even eating their stools. They watched each other defecate and waited to get “fed.” In spite of all this they were too cute to resist and loved cuddling!



The next day, off to their initial vet visit. While they were being evaluated, I bought crate pads, puppy wipes, food bowls, toys, food, and treats in triplets. NVSR board member, Nancy Tisdale and I got the results from the vet. Poppy had a fracture in her left back leg and a bone growth problem in her front leg; Phoebe had cherry eyes and injured front paws; Heidi was in the best shape. All had hookworms, GI problems and were malnourished. Nancy obtained vet and vaccination records, and I took the girls home to start caring for them.

Over the next three weeks, the sisters were isolated in our downstairs dog room and large yard while our dogs stayed upstairs and used the small yard. Each day we made 13 separate meals for different digestive needs of each puppy and our dogs. We fed the pups in their clean crates, washed towels, cleaned up vomit and diarrhea from those that got sick at night, cleaned up accidents, trained simple commands and leash walking, and had joint and separate play times. The three sisters played hard together and took long naps in their crates. They also needed socialization, and we started to think about appropriate adoption homes. Should they be adopted together? Should they be “only dogs”? What about children or cats? The journey to get all three sisters adopted to their forever homes eventually took six months.

**Poppy’s Journey** – At the end of April, Nancy Tisdale agreed to foster Poppy to address her extreme medical needs. In her words...

*During my years as a volunteer with NVSR, I have fostered two bi-black Shelties and I always wanted one of my own. When the three puppies*  
*continued next page*





arrived, I volunteered to foster Poppy, who had been described as the most loving of the three pups. I picked her up a day after returning from an international trip, knowing that she had multiple issues to be addressed. Poppy was the low dog of the pack and had been repeatedly challenged and bitten by her siblings. Her face still shows scarring around her muzzle. She also had a significant limp of the left front and back legs. The local vet had identified a fracture of the long bone of the back leg (femur) so that it was no longer connected to the head of the bone that sits in the socket of the hip joint (See medical details below). After nursing Poppy through two major orthopedic surgeries I couldn't let her go and adopted her.

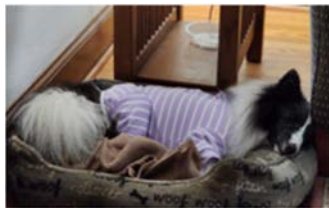
### Poppy's Medical Needs:

Poppy was referred to a local orthopedic specialist for evaluation. In addition to the femur fracture, he discovered that the growth plate of the front leg had closed prematurely, forcing her to put pressure on the incorrect area of the foot as she walked. He felt both injuries were likely caused by trauma and needed to be repaired because of the pain she was suffering.



She underwent an FHO (femoral head osteotomy) to remove the ball of the femur and the associated scarring. The remaining bone would form an artificial joint. During the same anesthesia, she underwent an osteotomy of the front leg to remove a portion of the bone to allow for additional bone growth. A pin was placed for extra stabilization.

She began weight bearing on the back leg almost immediately after surgery. She continued to become quite active and it was obvious that her pain was improving. When she returned for post-surgical evaluation at 6 weeks, it was discovered that the pin in her front leg had broken, but the surgeon did not feel this would affect her recovery.



(Pictures provided by Nancy Tisdale)





**The Sister Duo** – After Poppy left for her new foster home, Heidi and Phoebe had their second hookworm treatment, showed GI improvement, and continued to develop their own puppy personalities. Now they could be with our two Shelties (R-with Farrah). Phoebe wanted to play almost constantly. Both sisters were very smart and trainable, but we decided that they should go to separate homes because of sibling rivalry. So, Linda Hill agreed to foster Phoebe.

**Heidi's Journey** – Over the next three months, with time and work, Heidi developed socialization and training skills. She had survived the awful first seven months of life, then rescue, hookworms, GI upsets, first heat cycle, spay sur-



gery (L-recovering), and adjustments to living normally. Heidi needed an active playmate and a home with a fenced yard to expend all her puppy energy.

Now to find the perfect home to grow and learn. Four months and 8 days after rescue, Heidi met her forever adopters Cynthia and Greg and her new Australian Shepherd playmate Bella. (R-Heidi and Bella) In their words...

*Heidi is doing amazing and brightens up our lives and house. She is the cutest loving little dog. She brings us happiness. She and Bella have a blast playing. She is very smart and knows how to communicate what she wants. We can't imagine our family without her and it seems that she has been with us forever.*

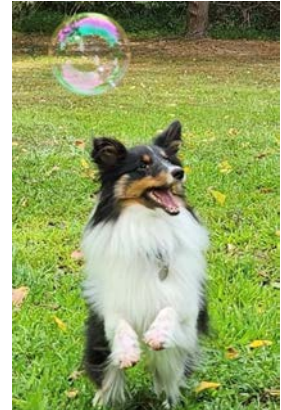
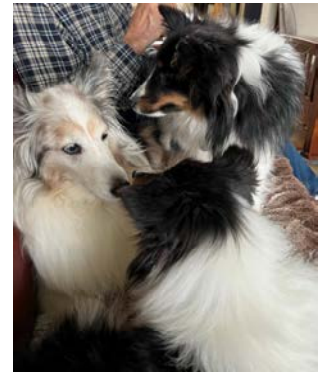


**Phoebe's Journey** – Phoebe was in heaven fostered by Linda Hill and getting 100% of her attention. Linda nurtured Phoebe's housetraining and socialization skills while taking care of her scalded front paws (L) sensitive to sun and grass. Despite her cherry eyes (not a medical problem) and using care with her paws, Phoebe was enjoying being a puppy.

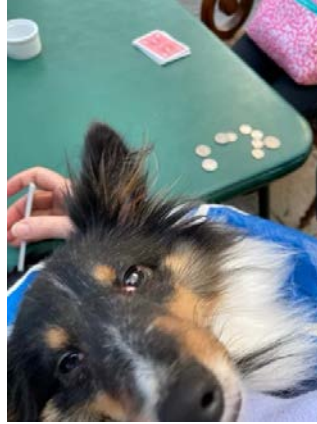
In June, Linda noticed differences in her normal routine. Phoebe had a severe medical emergency and needed a hysterectomy. She was recuperating, then needed additional surgery and care in Charlottesville, spent time back at our house and then back to Linda's to recover.

Phoebe needed a home with a fenced yard to expend her energy, no lawn chemicals (to protect her sensitive paws), and a compatible companion. After she celebrated her one-year birthday with bubbles, we found adopters Anne and Frank. In Anne's words...

*The beginning of the year was not good for us. We lost our Sheltie at age 15 and 6 months later our Westie at age 13. There was a big void in our house and our hearts. Nola, a Westie (14 months) came to us in August and she wanted a playmate. We had read about Phoebe and her adorable sisters. We went to visit Phoebe to see if she was accepting of us and Nola and came home with Phoebe. She and Nola had bonded, began romping, chasing balls and each other. She loves her walks and playing with Nola. She is the best watchdog and always greets at the door. What a treasure we found in Phoebe. Here are Anne's pictures of Phoebe relaxing with Nola, playing cards, and just being her cute self.*



*continued next page*



This was a very LONG six month journey for the “Three Sisters.” A special thanks and appreciation go to all the NVSR volunteers mentioned. Kathy Kelly and Kay Graves also helped with temporary foster care and transport. For this journey and rescue it took a community and a circle of love to care for and find perfect forever homes for dear Poppy, Heidi and Phoebe. These Three Sisters survived their trauma, never gave up, and give hope to all who despair, as they expand the circle of love to their new homes and playmates.



### **Cesare is enjoying the good life**

By John C. McLucas



Hello, NVSR friends. This update is about my best friend Cesare (pronounced CHAY-zah-reh), whom I adopted in April 2021.

Cesare is one of the major celebrities of my very friendly neighborhood in Baltimore. Every single time I take him out for a walk, friends and strangers comment on how beautiful he is, and he is quite vain about that. He is very quiet inside, but he barks proudly, wagging his tail, just to announce that he's on patrol every time we leave the house for a walk. He'll keep that up for a block or so, and then he barks again at every squirrel, rabbit, bus, truck, bird or big dog we see. He has dozens of human aunts and uncles and he loves them all, but his favorite is Uncle Lee next door. He drove me to Virginia the day I adopted Cesare, so that I could pay attention to the dog on the drive home. Here is a picture of Cesare on Uncle Lee's blue sofa during a visit. Thanks for all you do! -- John C. McLucas





## NVSR Volunteer Spotlight – Lisa Fox

Interviewed by Melinda McKenzie Hall

**Good morning, Lisa: How long have you been with NVSR?** I have been a volunteer since 2009.

**What inspired you to volunteer with NVSR?** MaryEllen Jones, from whom I adopted our first NVSR Sheltie, Galen, encouraged me to become a volunteer.

**What is your role? Has it changed over time?** More hats seemed to have piled on over time. I am currently the Foster, Adoption and Intake Coordinator. I started out sharing the Foster Coordinator role with Nancy Tisdale, soon taking over the whole role as I learned the ropes. Soon I was also the Intake Coordinator. I then began to share the Adoption Coordinator role with Martha, again gradually doing more of that work, now assisted by Elaine Taylor.

**What do you enjoy most about working with NVSR?** I enjoy working with foster parents and love to see neglected or troublesome Shelties blossom and thrive after coming to NVSR. I get special satisfaction from the glowing reports from adopters thrilled with their new dogs. I like to think I'd get the same glowing reports from the adopted dogs if they could email.

**How many dogs have you fostered or adopted in your lifetime?** I have adopted four NVSR dogs and fostered two dozen or so. (R-Lisa with Galen, Toby, Luca and foster Termi)

**Any uniquely rewarding stories about them?** My extremely unsocialized little Luca was the most challenging dog I've ever had, but long months and years of patient work with him prepared me to help the volunteers who fostered the Northumberland dogs. Luca eventually established a very strong bond with me, learned to respond to many cues, and became a dog puzzle addict. But fully gaining his trust took many months.



**How has your experience with NVSR influenced you as a dog owner today?** I have learned a great deal about the health, behavior, nutrition and training of Shelties from my colleagues in NVSR and from reading many books and articles.



**On a personal note...tell us something about yourself that our fellow volunteers would not have known: jobs, homes, hobbies, etc.** I was Associate Professor of Economics at Georgetown University for 9 years then became Director of Economic Training at the State Department's Foreign Service Institute for the next 25 years. I taught economics to mid-level Foreign Service officers—a fun job. Before my teaching career, my husband and I were in the Foreign Service, posted to Costa Rica, Uruguay and Colombia, a total of 8 years. I am a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate), working with abused and neglected children. I translate for Spanish-speaking patients at the Fauquier Free Clinic and do Pet Therapy with my Sheltie Tess at Fauquier Hospital (L-Lisa and Tess “on the job”). I enjoy kayaking, recorded books and hanging out with grandchildren.



## Canine Cognitive Disorder

By Gregg Bender



My Sheltie, Max, is facing Canine Cognitive Disorder. He is about 14 years old, but it's not the first time we have had to deal with it.

“Canine cognitive dysfunction (CCD) is a behavioral syndrome that affects senior dogs. Dogs with CCD show behavioral alterations such as disorientation, altered interactions with owners, other pets and the environment, sleep-wake cycle disturbance, house-soiling and changes in activity. Such dogs may have severely impaired cognitive function that is considered to be similar to dementia in humans.” (Source: National Library of Medicine, National Center for Biotechnology Information)

We take wonderful care of our Shelties so they will live to a healthy, happy old age. Overall, this is a great thing, but it can also bring CCD, “doggie Alzheimer’s”. The symptoms are strikingly similar to those in humans. Many dogs live into old age with no apparent cognitive problems.

Any dogs can contract CCD if they live long enough. Shelties are generally thought of as seniors at the age of ten years. According to AKC, the average lifespan of the Sheltie is 12 to 14 years. Our NVSR Shelties tend to live much longer, possibly due to the superior care and nutrition we provide. Many of our Shelties easily make it to 16 years or more.

We have experienced other symptoms with a few of our seniors, such as

- Fear and anxiety about familiar things like the backyard, interior of the home, their crate, familiar people, or other situations
- Pacing, either around a room, the backyard, or along a wall
- Getting stuck in corners or behind/against furniture or other obstacles
- Whining, barking, “crying”, or other vocalizations
- Sudden appearance of separation anxiety, even if just one family member leaves the dog’s sight
- Staring at walls, corners, etc., for long periods
- Sundowning (when your dog shows mild or no symptoms until late afternoon or evening). Max usually starts about 3:30 p.m.

There may be other symptoms idiosyncratic to your dog. Your powers of observation are essential, as CCD can begin with subtle symptoms. You know your dog best and when something is “just not right.” If you notice oddities in the behavior of your senior dog, consult your veterinarian.

Much like human Alzheimer’s, treatment is limited. Currently, the only medication available for dogs is Selegiline, also known by the trade names of Emsam, Depremyl or Zelapar. It is a MAOI inhibitor most commonly used as a treatment for Parkinson’s disease in humans. Some veterinarians are not familiar with it and you may need to ask about it. In any case, it can take a month or more to show effectiveness. We are trying it with Max to see if it helps. There are various herbal and nutritional supplements that might help, though there is no hard evidence that I can find. Be careful and skeptical of wild claims about products. *There is no magical cure for CCD.* Talk to other Sheltie owners and groups about their experiences.





We are trying a product recommended to us called Zesty Paws Senior Advanced 11- in-1 Bites from Bergstrom Nutrition. It's in the thinking of "can't hurt, might help." It is available from several outlets as a quick Google search will show. We found it through Amazon, as no one carries it locally. It will likely take a month or more to show results. A low dose of Trazodone is suggested to help with anxiety. You may have to adjust the dosage until you find the balance between anxiety reduction and sedation. We have had good results with it.

The advice available to help your senior dog is easy to follow. Keep a close eye on your dog for any changes in behavior or trouble. Help your dog with wandering and staring by petting and talking gently. Give your dog as much extra attention as you can to help prevent anxiety. Supply favorite toys, blankets, or other items to help him/her feel secure. Supervise when other animals are around. Max has gotten a bit unsteady and has gotten in a few minor tiffs with our younger Sheltie, Bennie.

A good source of information is the book *Remember Me?* by Eileen Anderson. It is available through *Whole Dog Journal* website.

Through it all, your Sheltie is the same dog he or she was before. Much of the time, things will appear close to normal. Your dog may still enjoy playing, food puzzles and walks. He/ she may even like to learn new things like toys or simple behaviors. You will need to support and comfort him/her more than usual. However, there is no need to panic. Dogs can happily live for a long time with CCD. Enjoy all your remaining time with your Sheltie.

### **Exciting news from Eric and Susan Thorson, Mom and Dad to three Shelties. Their Bella is now leader of a very special team! Read on from Eric and Susan ...**

Our Bella (NVSr 2019) has always had a rather vivid imagination and sees herself in charge of our two boys, Scotty (NVSr 2014) and Tucker, since the day she arrived five years ago. That has evolved into her imagined role as "Capt. Bella Boo and her team of Super Shelties."



Bella has videos describing her adventures. The holiday video is: "Bella and the Super Shelties Save Christmas". It is on her own YouTube channel: "Bella and her Team of Super Shelties." (Search for that exact title.) Bella and the Team are called upon by a desperate Santa, whose magnificent reindeer have gone missing right before Christmas Eve. Bella Boo and the team of Super Shelties head for the North Pole! Go get that cup of cocoa and enjoy the little team's adventures. Here they are: front to back: Scotty, Bella and Tucker.

They are such a wonderful family! You all at NVSR should be so proud of the work you do, and the happiness you bring to both the Shelties and their families!



## Louise Cortright and NVSR's Endowment Committee

By Kathy Coffelt, Wes Marks and Martha Heisel

Louise Cortright volunteered for many years with NVSR, fostering several quite difficult dogs that needed her skill and patience. Her long life included many years raising and training Shelties, her favorite dog breed. After retiring from a career of hospital lab work, she moved to Afton, Virginia, to a house that she designed herself. There she enjoyed a beautiful view, mountainside peace ... and several Shelties. Louise fostered puppies through oldsters, all of them lovingly cared for, and she adopted a few of them that she couldn't part with. Louise passed away in August 2022. We miss her wise advice about dogs, her enthusiasm and her humor. In her will, Louise left NVSR a substantial amount of money to be used for helping rescued animals. (R-Louise with Buddy Two Shoes)



In early 2023, NVSR set up an endowment committee to spread Louise Cortright's generosity to local rescues that needed financial assistance. The committee volunteers were Joyce Arndt, Kathy Coffelt, Ellen Lamm and Janet Knotts; Wes Marks, NVSR treasurer, assisted. NVSR volunteers suggested grant nominations for worthy animal rescue groups, not limited to any particular type of rescue or species. Louise loved all animals, so we felt it appropriate to help whoever needed it. The only requirements were for the grant recipient to be an animal rescue group and an IRS 501(c)(3) reliable non-profit. Committee members researched each nominee.

The committee received 12 nominations covering a range of rescue activities such as: cat rescue, dog shelter builders, pet food pantry for disadvantaged pet owners, a pet end-of-life sanctuary. We reached out to the nominees to ask a few questions – are they a non-profit? what project(s) do they need help with? how much money do they need? Most nominees needed funds for veterinarian bills with spay/neuter in almost every response. Other requests were for building materials, help with buying a transport van, and collecting pet food and supplies for disadvantaged pet owners. In the end, the committee recommended 12 grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,000.

Thank you, Louise. We will never forget your dedication to NVSR, your kindness and your love for rescued Shelties and other animals in need.

Here are the groups that Louise Cortright helped:

Lost Fantasy Rescue ([LostFantasySables.org](http://LostFantasySables.org))

Almost Home Herding Dog Rescue ([AlmostHomeHDR.org](http://AlmostHomeHDR.org))

Happy Tails ([TailsRescue.org](http://TailsRescue.org))



- Rescue Dog and End of Life Sanctuary (RescueDogandEndofLifeSanctuary.org)
- NWAL Shetland Sheepdog Rescue (SheltieRescue-NWAL.org)
- Furry Friends Needing Homes (Facebook: FFNH22664)
- Houses of Wood and Straw (HousesofWoodandStraw.org)
- Green Dogs Unleashed (GreenDogsUnleashed.org)
- Mutt Love Rescue (MuttLoveRescue.org)
- Cats at Long Street (TheCatsatLongStreet.org)
- Hampshire County Pet Adoption Program (hcpap.com)
- Northumberland County Animal Shelter (Facebook)



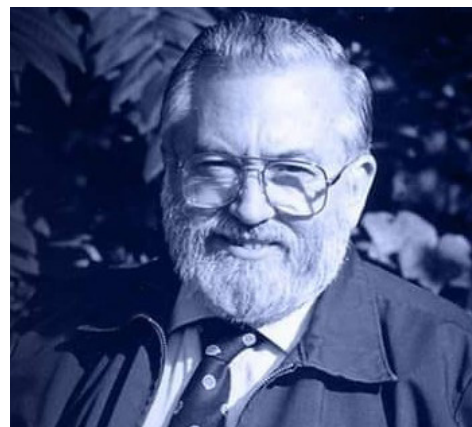
**THE 2024 NORTHERN VIRGINIA SHELTYE RESCUE CALENDAR**

is on sale NOW!

Price is \$22 which includes shipping.  
All proceeds go to support the Shelties!

Email: [shop@nvsr.org](mailto:shop@nvsr.org)  
to purchase your copy today!  
Order yours Today!!!!

YOU CAN'T BUY  
**LOVE**  
BUT YOU CAN  
**RESCUE IT**



**GAM Printers of Sterling, Virginia, and the Grant Family dedicate the printing of the Sheltie Spin in memory of their father, Chaplain Charlie Grant, who brought home their first rescue Sheltie while he was fund driving for the Sterling Volunteer Fire Department.**





## Eye Diseases In Older Shelties

By Susan Hendrix

Does your older Sheltie have bright, clear eyes, or are they cloudy? Does he paw at his face and have tear stains?

According to the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine, aging dogs often face ocular abnormalities ranging from benign changes to vision-threatening or painful diseases. Specialty vets can diagnose and rule out issues with an examination and diagnostic tests. Check out: <https://todaysveterinarypractice.com/ophthalmology/the-aging-canine-eye/>

This article discusses *calcific corneal degeneration* and the symptoms that led me to schedule an appointment with an eye specialist for Bentley, our 16-year-old Sheltie.

Calcific corneal degeneration is due to the presence of mineral and lipid (or fat) deposits. Such deposits degrade the cornea and, if left untreated, can become quite painful. Small erosions and ulcers form underneath sheets of mineralized cornea that create pits or ulcers, resulting in your dog squinting, rubbing the eyes and tearing.



Six months ago I noticed Bentley squinting more and pawing at his eyes that teared constantly. Our vet checked him and confirmed he has cataracts, but wasn't sure why he was rubbing his eyes. So, I scheduled an exam with Dr. Lisankis of Eye Care for Animals in Annapolis, MD.

Dr. Lisankis began her exam with a Schirmer Tear Test for tear production placing a strip of paper under each of Bentley's eye lids. Although this looked painful, he didn't mind. Good news ... his tear production is normal, ruling out dry eye. Next, Dr. Lisankis did a Fluorescein Stain, using orange dye (*fluorescein*) and a blue light to detect foreign bodies in the eye or scratches on the surface. Bentley's eyes were normal. She also tested Bentley's intraocular pressure, which decreases with age. A value of 10-25 mm Hg is normal in young dogs. Bentley's was 17 mm Hg in his left eye and 12 mm Hg in his right. A value higher than 25 mm HG can indicate glaucoma.

Since Bentley's initial exam and tests were all in the normal range, Dr. Lisankis felt comfortable starting him on a chelating eye drop medication call EDTA to help bind to the calcium and lift it off his eyes. He's currently getting one drop in each eye twice daily.

Within two weeks of starting the EDTA drops, Bentley stopped pawing his face and his eyes no longer tear. Dr. Lisankis was pleased with his progress at his two-week visit. He will continue this current protocol and be seen again for a recheck in six months.

I hope you will always pay attention to what is normal for your Sheltie. Though you respect your regular vet, it may be wise to seek out a specialist. I know Bentley is glad his human is looking out for him.



## Are you concerned about the new canine respiratory illness?

We are, too, and it pays to learn about it and take appropriate caution. Nancy Tisdale, one of our volunteers who is also a certified vet tech and a registered nurse, recently attended a webinar on this topic. Find the webinar at [K9illness.Trupanion.com](https://www.k9illness.trupanion.com). Here are a few of Nancy's take-aways ...

1. As a result of Covid more dogs have received disrupted vet care. More people work from home, there is less doggie daycare and fewer vet visits for vaccinations, particularly Bordetella. Also, more difficulty obtaining vet appointments.
2. Claims for canine respiratory diseases at Trupanion increased in 2021; peaked in September 2023.
3. Areas affected the most: Quebec (61-86% of claims), Ontario (70-73%), Oregon (61-86%), upper California (6.0%), lower California (8.71%), Virginia (5.41%)
5. Dogs with increased risk: flat-faced and brachycephalic dogs, for example, French bulldog.
6. Testing has revealed the usual types of respiratory infections in dogs: mycoplasma, influenza, Bordetella and streptococcus.
7. Symptoms: Mild: sneezing, coughing, red runny eyes. Serious: fever, appetite loss, difficulty breathing.
8. For mild cases, no testing or treatment is usually necessary. For more serious cases, PCR testing and cultures are needed.
9. For antibiotics, doxycycline seems to be working well, but antibiotics don't treat viruses. Mild cases don't need antibiotics because dogs are able to eliminate respiratory illnesses fairly easily. More serious cases need antibiotics and supportive care.
10. Chloramphenicol is not recommended. It has serious side effects and can be toxic.

### What to do:

Vaccinate your dog for Bordetella, parvo, adenovirus and influenza, especially if your dog is young. Use common sense and limit risk: social distancing and isolation, avoid sick dogs, dog parks, boarding and grooming facilities.

There's another good video on this topic at [nbcnews.com/health](https://www.nbcnews.com/health); search for "respiratory illness."

## Addie makes her new family very happy



From Felice, who adopted "Addie" in August 2023: Addie is simply a blessing to my family and particularly to me. After our two Sheltie boys passed, there was a profound emptiness in me as I grieved. I came to realize that while no other pet could fill the space my Poppy and Toffee held, there is room in my heart and so much love I needed to share with another Sheltie. It took quite a while of searching, at times discouraging, but then I found Addie on the NVSR website and it was like a miracle. Being selected to adopt her and seeing her running and barking for the first time, I knew it was meant to be. That was confirmed when I brought her home and she seamlessly fit into our home and hearts. I thank God for her. We absolutely love Addie and recognize how truly special she is and delight in her happiness with us.



### Northern Virginia Sheltie Rescue Directors and Coordinators

Directors .....Martha Heisel, Wes Marks, Nancy Tisdale  
 Treasurer ..... Wes Marks  
 Intakes, Foster Care Assignments & Adoptions ..... Lisa Fox,  
 Elaine Taylor  
 Shepherd Team .....Donna Martin, Cindy Foreso, Karin Trice,  
 Janie Robertson, Melinda McKenzie Hall, Sharon Daussin,  
 Anne Burke, Linda Lott, Carol Carr, Pat Quinlin,  
 Linda Lane-Hamilton  
 Events ..... Kathy Kelly  
 Newsletter ..... Martha Heisel  
 Facebook Pages.....Joan McGregor, Chris Sokol, Layla Mooradian  
 Sheltie Shop.....Wes Marks, Mary Mounts  
 Vet Committee.....Sharon Daussin,  
 Dana Greenwood, Mary Ellen Jones, Nancy Tisdale

Special thanks to the many volunteers who foster, transport, and contribute their time and talents to help the Shelties who are brought to or found by NVSR.

Newsletter submissions to sheltiespin@nvsr.org  
 Website www.nvsr.org • E-Mail: shelties@nvsr.org

Northern Virginia Sheltie Rescue  
 977 Seminole Trail, PMB 314  
 Charlottesville VA 22901  
 703-912-4002

Northern Virginia Sheltie Rescue  
 977 Seminole Trail, PMB 314  
 Charlottesville VA 22901



#### I would like to make a donation to the Northern Virginia Sheltie Rescue

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

#### Donation Amount:

\$25     \$50     \$75     \$100    Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to Northern Virginia Sheltie Rescue. Mail to Treasurer, NVSR, 977 Seminole Trail, PMB 314, Charlottesville VA 22901

Northern Virginia Sheltie Rescue, Inc., is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3), tax-exempt corporation. A financial statement is available upon request from the Commonwealth of Virginia Division of Consumer Affairs, P.O. Box 1163, Richmond, VA 23218-1163.

#### NVSR MISSION STATEMENT

NVSR will take in any Sheltie in need regardless of age, except those with histories of repeated, unprovoked biting. Dogs accepted into rescue will be evaluated in foster homes, receive veterinary care and necessary resocialization, and ultimately be placed in homes where they will be loved, protected, and well cared for. We support efforts to reduce pet overpopulation; all of our Shelties will be spayed or neutered prior to adoption or, if not yet at a safe age to be neutered, placed on a spay/neuter contract at the time of adoption. NVSR is a 501(c)(3) organization.