

Greyhound Adoption: The Great American Success Story

By Dick Ciampa

This is a story about adoption, racing greyhound adoption. Greyhound racing started in the United States in the 1920's when it was thought that greyhounds were vicious and would not make good pets. It was said they wore muzzles and were trained to kill so being a pet was out of the question.

Through the 20's, 30's, 40's, and 50's greyhounds were either put down or held for breeding. Since the number held for breeding was a small percentage of the population the majority were put down.

Cora Eisenzimer adopted a greyhound in 1957 and while that was probably the start of greyhound adoption it wasn't until 1982 when greyhound tracks in St. Petersburg, Florida and a year later in Seabrook, New Hampshire started what would be considered the first formal adoptions of racing greyhounds.

It was the greyhound industry that started what is now one of the great American success stories, Greyhound Adoption.

As the years went by adopting greyhounds became more and more popular. Adoption groups started popping up and the Great American Success Story was underway. What started out as REGAP, Retired Greyhounds as Pets, went nationwide when they became Greyhound Pets of America. With chapters of GPA now growing into many states the number of greyhounds being adopted was now in the thousands and growing.

If you fast forward to 2011 there were an estimated 200,000 greyhounds adopted as pets. That is not an estimate by anyone in the greyhound industry, but an estimate in a paper done by Jen Krebs, Grey2K Board of Director, and Dr. Couto, a most respected greyhound veterinarian.

Those who believe today's greyhounds are in grave danger when their career is over are living in the past and getting fleeced out of their money if they are donating to a group that is telling them otherwise.

Today greyhound farms routinely hold a few crates for adoption dogs. Relationships have been forged between adoption groups and farmers in the Midwest and those farmers will hold dogs at no cost until those dogs can be moved into adoption. It may be as little as a few days, or a few weeks, even months but farmers do it because adoption is important to them. It is one of the ways they help out.

Greyhound farmers don't have time to hit the keyboard to try and defend themselves from the Grey2K's of the world. Greyhound farmers have to tend to their dogs 24/7/365. There are no holidays, there is no taking the day off because you are sick, there is no not going out to take care of the dogs because it is below zero and snowing. Greyhound farmers are doing the real work for the greyhounds, they are the greyhound keepers, and they are the people that make the greyhound what it is today.

Unlike the promoted, self-interested myth, your greyhound pet was not an abused and neglected creature magically transformed into the loving pet that resides in your house because Grey2K waved its magic wand and threw some fairy dust in the air. The process that made your dog who s/he is today started from day one on the greyhound farm. The dogs are handled and cared for and romp and play in their runs with their littermates.

Greyhound farmers are just like everyone else in many respects. They get married and have kids and those kids go to school just like yours. Those kids play basketball or soccer or golf and do the same things your kids do. The one difference is the greyhound farmer's children get to play with greyhound puppies and that is something that will benefit the greyhound later in life when s/he becomes a pet.

Sometimes the transition from track to house pet can take a bit of time, because you have rocked your greyhound's world and s/he is in a strange place with strange people without friends or a familiar routine. However, the true greyhound goofy, playful personality developed at the farm will come out in time.

There is an old saying "believe what your eyes tell you" and if you think back to the 1980's or before and think about how many greyhounds you saw walking around your city or town you will probably say I didn't see any. Now think about the last twenty or

twenty-five years and you will probably say I see greyhounds being walked or running in a park quite often. Greyhounds seem to be everywhere.

If you believe what your eyes tell you then it makes sense that the greyhound is getting adopted at a very high rate today. What was the fate of a greyhound before the 1980's is not what it has been in the decades since.

It is not uncommon for a greyhound hauler with space in his truck to take adoption dogs at no charge in the direction he is going. It is not uncommon for a kennel owner or farmer to haul some of their dogs from one place to another and take adoption dogs as well and drop them off on their way. It's not uncommon for the National Greyhound Association or American Greyhound Council to pay for a haul of dogs to a part of the country that has trouble getting greyhounds to adopt out.

What is uncommon is for Grey2K to pay for anything that has to do with adoption. Grey2K doesn't pay, they want you to pay. Grey2K will show a dog on their Facebook page that is looking to be adopted, but they aren't donating to help that dog, that is what you are meant to do, separately. You donate to them, they take.

There are hundreds of greyhound adoption groups in the United States, some pro-racing, some anti-racing and the rest neutral. Most do a good job of adopting dogs out, however none of the dogs are in need of rescuing. They are waiting for a home and were in no danger at the track. Today every track has an adoption group or groups that they work with and most, if not all, tracks provide space and crates for the dogs waiting to be adopted out or moved to another adoption group.

Many anti-racing adoption groups do a disservice to people adopting their dogs by not providing the dog's racing name or acknowledging the dog has been adopted on the Greyhound-Data web site. This is done to make it appear that the dog has "disappeared". Call or email the National Greyhound Association with your dog's tattoo numbers and they can provide you with your dog's racing name.

Because of the combined efforts of the greyhound industry, National Greyhound Association, American Greyhound Council

and the hundreds of adoption groups that work tirelessly adopting these wonderful greyhounds out, greyhound adoption really is:

AMERICAN SUCCESS STORY

THE GREAT