

Alumni Update: How Nashville Became Mollie Jo

In October 2020, Tulsa Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) seized a very large number of dogs living in deplorable conditions, starting a special little dog's journey to our home in Rochester. Paws and Claws welcomed three of these dogs — Seattle, Boston, and Nashville — with hopes of quickly placing this trio into their individual Forever Homes. After several weeks, Nashville remained behind as her partners were adopted into their new families. She cowered in the corner of her kennel and would barely make eye contact. Due to her extreme anxiety, she frequently vomited and shied away from any contact. People would look at Nashville, but no one chose to adopt her. Time passed, until one day I looked at her picture on Facebook and started thinking about reaching out to this little soul.

One evening in early December, my husband Gene and I donated our large dog crates to Paws and Claws after the deaths of our two beautiful, elderly Greyhounds. We met Tanya as she was leaving for the day and she mentioned that there was a small dog waiting for a new family and asked if we wanted to “take a look.” Of course we did, and that was our very first encounter of how truly fearful a dog can be from past life experiences. Nashville forced herself into the corner of her kennel and trembled. There was a point where we made brief eye contact, and her incredibly sad golden eyes spoke to both of us — she needed a second chance in life, and we decided to take her home for the weekend.

We arrived bright and early the following day, feeling confident that we would be able to conquer her fears and anxiety by providing comfort and love. We couldn't have been more mistaken! It took almost 45 minutes to get a leash on her to transport her to a crate, and then only by placing a muzzle. She was simply terrified, and we were scared as well, wondering what we were getting into. We had two other small dogs at home, and no idea what lay ahead of us. We are experienced dog owners, and always choose rescues to join our family, but Nashville was unlike any of the others.

She was afraid of everything, and we felt confident that she hadn't lived inside a home, or what may have resembled a traditional home. She tried to hide under everything, both inside and out. She frantically attempted to burrow under shrubs in our fenced yard, or crawl under furniture. We kept her leashed simply because we needed to have something to grab onto when she attempted to escape. She continued to vomit frequently that weekend, refused to eat, drink, or void. But those eyes! She would sneak a little peek at us, and we knew there was a gentle little soul that needed a soft touch, patience, and a lot of love. She needed us! By the end of the first day, Nashville became Mollie Jo and began her



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— Michelle Enos

Above: Mollie Jo, feeling safe in her Forever Home with the Enos family.

journey into becoming a well-behaved and much-loved family member!

Mollie Jo has been with us for almost eight months and has experienced countless “firsts.” She gradually became comfortable and confident that hands are for stroking her gently, and her water and food dishes will always be full. She loves beds and blankets, so she has a soft bed in every room. We knew she was finally feeling safe when she began sleeping with her eyes fully closed, and snoring gently.

She loves to lay in the sun on the patio now instead of digging into corners of the yard to hide. She did not bark for months, and now she loves to bark for attention! She has been on vacation, travelled in a convertible, spent time on a boat and prances through the neighborhood on a leash. She still struggles with intermittent vomiting and at this time, we remain unable to reach out to her and pet her or put a leash on without a bit of a challenge. That will come. We are able to stroke her now beautiful coat and whisper we love her when she is laying in bed or sitting next to us — as long as it is on her terms and she feels safe for us to reach out to her.

We will never know or understand her beginnings, but we love our little Mollie Jo and promise to provide a loving and safe home — she deserves that!

— Michelle Enos, Paws and Claws Board Member