

Bellevue couple takes in abandoned mother, nine kids'



Richard and Susan Randall, who volunteer at an organization that rescues golden retrievers, play with the puppies in their backyard Mon, June 30.

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The pregnant mother was first spotted wandering the roadside somewhere along the North Olympic Peninsula.

A man picked her up and dropped her off at the Port Ludlow shelter - and just in time.

The mother — a 5-year-old golden retriever - was in poor health and within days of delivering her puppies.

A foster home that had temporarily taken the mother in wasn't comfortable with whelping a litter, so they contacted the Renton-based Evergreen Golden Retriever Rescue organization.

That's how Susan and Richard Randall have ended up with a litter of golden retrievers in the backyard of their Bellevue home.

On May 10, the organization transported the dog to the Randall's home. Two days later and with the help of many volunteers, the couple whelped a litter of nine golden retrievers.

"This is the first time that a litter has been whelped," Richard said of the Evergreen Golden Retriever Rescue, which in most cases takes in adult dogs. "So this is very unusual to have puppies. I think the closest we came was two years ago when (the organization) had six, 10-week-old puppies."

Last week, the now eight-week-old puppies wagged their tails and jumped up on a wire fence, a puppy playpen of sorts in the Randall's backyard. Each puppy had a different colored collar around the neck, including pink and red for the only two females, so the couple can keep track of who's who.

Susan scooped one up who she referred to as "little red girl," who in turn licked Susan's chin.

"We've had our own litters in the past, so we were partly prepared for this," she said, adding that they also currently have three grown golden retrievers of their own. The couple has volunteered for the organization for eight years and Susan is also the golden retriever representative for the Seattle Pure Bred Dog Rescue.

But they weren't exactly ready for the daunting birth.

When the mother, Carmal, arrived in Bellevue, the Randall's found out she had been micro-chipped. Port Ludlow authorities were able to trace her veterinarian to Nevada, where she had been treated for four years. The veterinarian released Carmal's name and age.

The owner who had taken her to the veterinarian was a woman who may have given Carmal away to family members, "but we don't know past that what the history is," Susan said.

They also don't know the sire of the litter, though several experienced breeders have determined the puppies are most likely purebred golden retrievers.

Carmal came to the Randall's on a Saturday and the couple quickly pulled out a whelping box that they disinfected and assembled as the mother seemed ready to deliver.

Organization volunteers came to the Randall's from as far as Maple Valley and Renton. Some brought overnight gear and took turns sleeping on the couch next to Carmal to watch her through the night. Finally on Monday morning, her water broke and volunteers helped deliver five puppies.

But then the couple had to rush Carmal to the veterinarian as one puppy (who did not survive) got caught in the birth canal. Five more puppies were born by C-section, one of which died five days later after her leg became infected.

After the birth, several volunteers dropped by to help bottle feed the puppies every two hours as Carmal wasn't producing enough milk.

"So it was just a group thing that happened," Susan said of the experience, adding that she is thankful for everyone's help, including area veterinarians.

Most of the puppies have now been placed with prospective adopters, who the organization has thoroughly screened. The organization matches each dog with the family situation, "not just first come first serve," Susan said. "We like to know how much experience each family has had as people often think that golden retrievers have the best temperament and they don't need to be trained, which is actually not true."

The donation to adopt a golden retriever through the organization is \$500.

Richard said the couple wants to raise awareness of the golden retrievers that are rescued in the area. Each year, the organization places about 80 dogs in the greater-Seattle area, he noted.

"The advantage of groups like ours is we take pressure off the shelters, otherwise you just have an over abundance of dogs in shelters," he said.

Perhaps even more important is that the rescue organization has volunteers who work tirelessly to give dogs - like Carmal - a chance at a good life.

Carmal is now down to 111 pounds and only has about 40 more pounds to shed. She is back in Port Ludlow recovering from surgery with the family who fostered her and will, most likely, adopt her.

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For information about Evergreen Golden Retriever Rescue, visit www.egrr.net.

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