

Caring for senior canines

ElderDog Canada finds homes for pets that have lost their companions

ElderDog is a national, non-profit charity, headquartered in Nova Scotia with chapters (Pawds) in six provinces to date, including a very active one on P.E.I.

Aadra Cole



ElderDog is 100 per cent volunteer-run and there are no fees for any services. Whether it is helping healthy, independent seniors to find an older canine companion, finding new homes for older dogs who have lost their human or providing help with basic dog care, the work of ElderDog Canada is dedicated to supporting aging dogs, aging people and the important connection they enjoy.

For example, just before her 11th birthday, Roxy lost her human companion and was in need of a loving home to spend her sunset years. David, a P.E.I. senior looking for the companionship of a gentle, older dog, heard about Roxy and a match was made. And when Joan and Peter, senior Island residents, had to say goodbye to their beloved dog, their home soon felt empty. It wasn't long before little Zoey, who had recently lost her human companion, found a place in their heart and home.

Or consider Arlene, who lives at home with her loyal companion, Regis. He was a vital part of Arlene's daily life and well-being. Mobility issues, especially in winter, make it difficult for Arlene and Regis to get out for daily walks. Enter volunteers from the P.E.I. Pawd of ElderDog Canada who show up like clockwork to help Arlene with her dog so that they can stay and be well together for as long as possible.

For both well seniors and those who are less active, dogs are a source of reliable companionship and an enhancement to quality of life, especially to those who feel lonely and isolated—a significant problem for many seniors. Animals help elderly people gain a renewed sense of purpose and an increased sense of self-worth as well as a stronger sense of in-



ELDERDOG CANADA/SUBMITTED PHOTO

After mourning the death of her own dog, Joy found new joy in life when Elderdog volunteers matched her with Prayer, a senior dog in need of a new home. Joy is an active senior.

AT A GLANCE

For more information about ElderDog Canada go to www.elderdog.ca, email info@elder-dog.ca or phone 1-855-336-4226

dependence.

Most older adults express a desire to remain in their own home as they age. Often they want to do so in order to be able to remain with their companion animals.

ElderDog regularly receives phone calls from seniors who report that they recently lost their "best friend" and cannot imagine living the rest of their lives without a dog to love and care for. As one senior put it: "I am old and I want an old dog just like me so we can be old

together."

There is no shortage of older dogs surrendered to shelters or left behind when a human companion dies or relocates to a long-term care or retirement facility. Because of their age, old dogs are not easily adoptable. ElderDog provides loving homes for old dogs to live out their lives with the dignity they deserve and fulfills a wish of older adults for the loving companionship of an older dog.

Through ElderDog's Dog Care Support for Seniors, volunteers provide regular help to seniors living at home with a dog and needing assistance with basic dog care activities. This support promotes the health and well being of both older people and their dogs.

See SENIOR, page B5



ELDERDOG CANADA/SUBMITTED PHOTO

With help from Elderdog Canada volunteers, Precious was placed in a new, loving home after her owner died.

Senior dog care

FROM B4

Ardra Cole is a founding member of ElderDog. Animal Talk is a monthly column in The Guardian produced by PEI Companion Animal Welfare Initiative (CAWI), the goal of which is to improve the welfare of owned and un-owned companion animals on P.E.I. Member groups are the P.E.I. Humane Society, Cat Action Team, Spay-Aid P.E.I., P.E.I. Veterinary Medical Association, P.E.I. department of agriculture and forestry, P.E.I. 4-H and Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre at AVC. For more information, see princeedwardisland.ca/en/search/site/CAWI. Readers may send questions related to the well-being of owned and unowned companion animals to ask-cawi@gmail.com.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Ardra Cole, author of this column, enjoys spending time with her dogs. She is a founding member of ElderDog.

■ Happy adoption



KRYSTAL PETERSEN/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Lilly and Nova, sisters, were adopted as two-month-old kittens in December 2016. Owners Krystal and Colin say, "They sleep with us every night and love when we relax and watch a movie so they can snuggle right in next to us. They like to play with their toy mice or lay in the sun in their hammock. We are so lucky to have these two little girls in our lives."