

## **DAR&E Under Attack**

In recent months myriad allegations have been made against our organization by some former members of DAR&E via Internet websites and blast emails to our membership and other former volunteers. We regret the inconvenience and annoyance this has caused to so many of our members and supporters, and we regret that after so many months our detractors have been unable to move forward and channel their energies toward more positive endeavors. We had hoped to take the high road and avoid any response to these baseless allegations, but the attacks have become so vicious, continuous, and aimed at many DAR&E supporters (companies, shelters, and individuals,) that we feel compelled to comment on our position and purpose.

### **Animal Rescue is Emotional!**

Rescue work can be very rewarding and satisfying, but it can also be very stressful and emotionally challenging. We believe that anyone who comes to DAR&E as a volunteer, including those who were members in the past, joins in the rescue of Dobermans because they sincerely want to do what is “best for the dogs.” It takes caring, sensitive people to do rescue work in the first place. Unfortunately, while we may share a common, sincere desire to help rescue a favorite breed of dog, individuals often have different ideas about what is best for a particular dog or for the rescue group, in general. Conflicts are inevitable in any large group of individuals, but conflicts can easily become exaggerated in groups such as rescue because emotions run higher when the health and welfare of an animal or group of animals hangs in the balance. Rescue efforts are most successful, though, when the various rescuers can put aside their differences and focus on getting the real, day-to-day rescue work accomplished – getting dogs out of shelters, fostering, transporting, fundraising, conducting home visits, and adopting dogs out to loving homes they deserve.

### **Structure is Essential!**

Virtually every organization, large or small, needs strong leadership to be effective. It would be impractical – virtually impossible even – to put every single decision before a vote of the entire membership, so we rely on a Board of Directors to make many important decisions for the group. We conduct an annual election of officers in a democratic process and any member can be nominated and elected to serve on the Board of Directors. We do require that a member serve a minimum of one year on the Board before being nominated for President, Vice-President, or Treasurer to ensure that members who hold these offices have a thorough understanding of the organization and can demonstrate the required skill and dedication necessary to perform these important, time-consuming roles to support the group.

Serving on the Board of Directors can be quite a challenge, as our current Board well knows! When conflicts arise in the group and tempers flare, Board members are often attacked personally for the very tough decisions they have to make. What is best for the rescue group is sometimes in conflict with what an individual or several individuals may desire. For example, everyone would love to find a loving home for every single dog we rescue from a shelter, but the reality is that some dogs are simply not adoptable due to extreme medical, emotional, or behavioral issues. For this reason, we have an Evaluation Committee whose purpose is to evaluate dogs with these extreme conditions to determine whether they are adoptable and to ensure that we adopt dogs to new homes in a responsible, ethical manner.

## **Fostering Is Our Foundation**

Opening your home, and your life, to foster a dog is hard work – plain and simple. For all the feeding, cleaning, training, trips to the vet, and sleepless nights you put into a needy, sad little dog, the only reward you seem to get back in return is the heartbreak of handing over this happy, healthy, beautiful canine to someone else! Yet fosters find it rewarding and continue to give generously of their time, energy, and resources. We are so grateful for our many outstanding fosters and for those who have fostered for DAR&E in the past. We could not survive as a rescue organization without their extraordinary foster work.

We rely on our fosters not only to care for their foster dogs, but also to help determine which of our approved adopters will provide the most suitable home for a particular dog. The foster parent usually knows the dog's character and needs better than anyone else. Unfortunately, there are times when a foster, (even one who is well-meaning and dedicated to rescue,) may not possess the required skills to foster a particular dog or may become overly zealous about a dog and behave in a manner inconsistent with the policies and guidelines that have been established over many years by the group. These situations are quite rare, certainly, but there have been a few instances in which the Board was forced to remove a dog from a particular foster home to protect the interests of the dog or to protect the mission and liability of the rescue group.

In the case that has initiated so much controversy on the Internet and via email, one of our former fosters disagreed with a decision by the Board. The Board agreed that the previous foster parent was qualified to adopt the dog in question – despite the fact that there had been some concerns about how the previous foster (now the approved adopter) would handle some behavioral issues associated with this particular dog. The dog has a genetic deformity that the approved adopter, a veterinarian, has successfully worked with before in other dogs, but the dog also had some behavioral issues for which the approved adopter was not necessarily trained to handle and which required additional time and energy commitments. Our former foster raised concerns about returning the dog and alleged that the dog had been starved and neglected by the approved adopter while being fostered. These allegations, however, were unsubstantiated and unwarranted. There is no evidence that the dog was ever neglected, abused, or in any physical danger while being fostered by the now approved adopter. Sadly, by this point, a lot of emotion had been introduced into the discussion and it became apparent that the former foster was determined not to work with the Board or the approved adopter. The most egregious act, however, was that the former foster not only refused to return the dog to the Board, but gave the dog to a third party in order to hide it from the rescue group. The whereabouts of the dog are now unknown and there is no way to determine whether the dog is receiving proper care and attention. The former foster claims the dog was given to someone who would ensure a loving, healthy home, yet also claims to have absolutely no knowledge of where the dog is located or how to verify the health and welfare of the animal. These two concepts are in direct opposition to one another, and are completely contrary to any notion of ethical dog placement or rescue work. Despite numerous attempts to work with our former foster, no agreement could be reached and the rescue group was forced to seek legal action regarding the deliberate theft of the dog.

## **Pictures: Worth 1,000 Words - But Words Can Be Helpful!**

Many photos have been posted on the Internet and allegedly depict neglect or abuse of dogs while in DAR&E's care. Photos of the dog stolen from DAR&E claim to be "Before" and "After" views of the dog to demonstrate how thin and unhealthy the dog was when our former foster took the dog away from the approved adopter. If you look carefully at the photos, however, you can see that the dog has a shiny, healthy hair coat and full, round hips in both photos – which a starved dog would not have. In the "Before" shot, the dog is down on the floor in a slightly awkward position as she rests on her deformed limb – and the side view photo is undoubtedly intended to accentuate the ribs and give the appearance that the dog is dangerously thin. The "After" photo claims to show dramatic, rapid improvement after only a week of care by the former foster, yet it is shot from above looking down on the dog rather than in the side view. Also, the photos are taken in almost the exact same place at the same time of day with the same amount of sunlight. It appears more likely that the photos were all taken at the same time from different angles to give the dog a thinner or fuller appearance as desired. Photos taken out of context can be terribly subjective. For example, there are numerous photos on the veterinarian's (approved adopter's) website that show the dog healthy and happily spending time with the vet and her other dog, yet our detractors ask you to believe that the dog was being neglected while in her care.

There are also photos on the Web that allegedly show dogs that are dangerously thin, deprived of proper medical attention, or in other ways neglected while kenneled by DAR&E in third-party facilities. These allegations are most treacherous because they not only attack DAR&E, but also question the integrity and professionalism of shelters and veterinary practices that have done nothing but offer generosity and support to our rescue efforts. DAR&E has not kenneled dogs with disreputable establishments nor allowed them to be held under conditions that were potentially harmful to the animal. These accusations are fallacious and specifically designed to incite anger and hatred against our organization by playing on the emotions and sensitivity of well-meaning animal lovers. The photos are naturally upsetting given the context in which they are presented, but sadly they are misleading and misrepresentative of our mission, goals, and practices. We regret terribly the bad press and irritation this hateful and needless assault has brought to providers who were kind enough to support us and care for some of our Dobes.

Anyone who volunteers in dog rescue must face some very unpleasant circumstances and horrific behavior by some of our fellow human beings. Dogs that are dumped into shelters, or even surrendered directly to a rescue by the owner, are often horribly abused or neglected, sickly or in need of immediate medical attention, hungry and emaciated, scarred (both physically and mentally,) or even disfigured. It is important to remember that a photo can be taken out of context or given a false date, "Before" and "After" photos can be switched, etc. While the adage is true that a picture can evoke more immediate and stronger response than 1,000 words, it is also true that you often need more details about a photo before you make an assessment about the meaning or veracity of what you see.

Another unfortunate reality about rescue is that many dogs do suffer adverse effects when they are kenneled for several months or perhaps even for several days. An otherwise healthy dog may lose considerable weight in a kennel due to stress and anxiety regardless of the amount of good nutrition and exercise that is provided. It is, of course, our goal to find foster homes for all of the dogs we take in and limit the amount of time any one dog is kenneled, but

we unfortunately find ourselves many times with more dogs than we have foster homes. Nearly every rescue group in the country, however, is struggling with this same limitation - as you will see if you visit their websites and read their pleas for volunteers to foster.

Some dogs are also terribly difficult to place in foster homes for a variety of reasons. The same medical, emotional, and behavioral issues that can keep a dog from being adopted may curtail the ability to place the dog even in a foster home. We have often faced the choice between holding a dog in a kennel or leaving the dog in a shelter with a time limit and kill policy. These challenges are frustrating, of course, but they are also an unavoidable part of rescue so we must cope with them as best we can.

### **Play Nice Or Find Another Sandbox**

Contrary to claims, our organization is not a totalitarian dictatorship in which one person controls the entire membership; neither are our volunteers mindless drones without any thought or input into the decision making process. Discussion is always helpful and we welcome suggestions and even constructive criticism from any of our members. At some point, however, discussion must yield some decisive action and we must move forward. We respect and even anticipate some disagreements in the process, as we would in any organization, but we hope that our volunteers can stay focused on the Big Picture: – Rescuing as many Dobermans as we can and providing positive education about the breed.

We welcome new volunteers and will gladly accept assistance from anyone who has a genuine interest in supporting our mission and goals. We welcome your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions, and we gratefully accept your financial contributions or offers to roll up your sleeves and help out! If you are more interested in complaining than contributing to our success, however, or if you plan to serve your own private agenda in an attempt to undermine the organization, we would prefer that you simply direct your attention elsewhere. We have been quite saddened to learn that some of our volunteers were more actively engaged in personal attacks on the group or individual members than in rescue activities. When volunteers have failed to contribute in any single productive manner for several months or have actively posted venomous accusations on the Internet or misused the email list-serve, we have been forced to remove those volunteers from active membership. We understand that some volunteers have limited time and energy to dedicate and we also believe in the right to free speech, but we naturally want our members to be active and supportive of the group, our mission, and activities. We hope that those who feel they cannot support us will find other venues or positive means by which they can express their opinions, energies, and passions in a constructive manner.

Many people use the phrase and claim to be “doing it for the dogs,” but the proof of that claim often lies in the ability to overlook disagreements and frustrations and remain focused on the overall goal. We are blessed with a strong, active membership of volunteers, many of whom are fairly new, yet many who have been with us for numerous years, who have the ability to do just that – stay focused on the goal. We are human and we all make mistakes, but we learn from our shortcomings, move forward, and persevere in our efforts to rescue these loyal dignified Dobermans that we love. We continue to face adversities, overcome challenges, and endure outlandish criticism from others who would rather point out weaknesses and snipe at our efforts than contribute to the success of those efforts. We are not going away anytime soon! We are here and we’re on a mission! As long as we identify a need to rescue

Dobermans in our region, we will continue to be true to our mission and we will endeavor to assist and rescue Dobermans in need and education the public about this marvelous breed of dogs.

If you have questions or concerns about our organization, please feel free to contact us via email at:

[darefeedback@yahoo.com](mailto:darefeedback@yahoo.com)

or call our DAR&E Hotline at: **410-663-1694.**