

Lollypop Farm's Seniors-for-Seniors program makes perfect matches

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By Katina Antoniadou, Lollypop Farm

Older pets have a tough time in animal shelters. After living comfortably with the same family for years, the transition to the busy, unfamiliar shelter environment can be a shock. And a “mature” dog or cat already has one strike against him before he sets foot in the shelter’s kennels: his age.

Many adopters are unwilling to take a chance on an older pet, despite the benefits he can offer, and these animals are often overlooked.

Although it’s difficult to resist the undeniable cuteness of a fuzzy puppy or kitten, senior pets offer many advantages. Shelter dogs who have left puppyhood behind are often already housetrained — a big bonus. And as owners of senior dogs know, the saying, “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks,” just doesn’t hold true. Adult cats and dogs are apt to be less destructive and have calmer personalities, too. At the same time, adding an older pet to your family doesn’t have to mean having a furry friend who sleeps all day; many senior pets still have lots of energy and love to play.

To help highlight these dogs and cats available for adoption, Lollypop Farm offers a Seniors-for-Seniors program that matches senior adopters with older pets. The regular adoption fee is waived for individuals age 60 or older who bring home a pet who is six years or older, and the usual “extras” are still included, such as spay/neuter, vaccinations, a free veterinary exam and much more. In 2008, 70 dogs, 93 cats and one rabbit found new homes through the Seniors-for-Seniors special offer.

Two of those lucky pets were Lemit and Budget, who waited in their kennel at Lollypop Farm in the spring of 2008. Despite the dogs’ purebred pedigrees, many potential adopters passed had passed them by without a second look. Lemit, a cocker spaniel, was 10 years old, as was his good buddy, Budget, a beagle.

One hundred miles away in Bernhards Bay, N.Y., Mary Lou and Tony Ciesla were searching online for a cocker spaniel when they found Lemit on Lollypop Farm’s website. The Cieslas, who had only had puppies in the past, decided to take a chance on Lemit and his furry friend — who had been together for their whole lives — and adopted them in May 2008. “We didn’t mind trying these two,” says Mary Lou. “We had never had two dogs before, but these are great. They really make us happy.”

Lemit and Budget are thriving in their new home. Frightened by stairs at first, Lemit learned how to scale them easily within just a few days. And debunking the myth that old dogs can’t learn new tricks, Budget has lost more than three pounds. “He looks like a beagle now, says

Mary Lou. “With his newfound lightness, he runs around like crazy.”

Besides tearing around the backyard and racing up and down the stairs, the pooch pals like to play ball, take daily morning walks, and munch on healthy snacks like carrots and blueberries.

“They think they’re getting a treat,” Mary Lou says.

These two buddies also have quite the personalities. Mary Lou explains, “Budget is definitely the fearless leader of the pack. We’re sure one of these days we’ll find Budget flying by on a motorcycle with Lemit in a sidecar, their ears flopping in the breeze!

The Cieslas are grateful that they took the chance on two old friends — they wouldn’t hesitate to do it again.

To learn more about the Seniors-for-Seniors adoption program and adoptable pets at Lollypop Farm, call (585) 223-1330 or visit www.lollypop.org.

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