



# ENJOYING THE GOLDEN YEARS

By Dawn Foster, Director of Marketing & Communications

For many senior animals entering the nation's shelters, the outcome is seldom good. Seniors (still defined as dogs and cats 7 years and older) are among the first to be euthanized in many public facilities that have an abundant supply of young, energetic pets. But the Sacramento SPCA believes in giving more than shelter. We believe in giving sick, injured and older animals a second chance. We know it will take them longer to find a home. That despite the wonderful attributes of older dogs and cats (house- and litter-trained, calmer, etc.) these animals are frequently overlooked in favor of puppies and kittens. But we also know that they can and do find happiness in their golden years, that the right family will come along. Until that day, we vow to keep them safe, healthy and loved.

## MEET GORDIE

On an April afternoon at the golden age of twelve, Gordie was surrendered to the Sacramento SPCA because her family was moving and could no longer keep her. The staff and volunteers immediately fell in love with the Pittie mix; she was great on walks, had the sweetest personality and loved regular belly rubs. Unfortunately, potential adopters just couldn't see past her breed and age. Despite her many appearances on Good Day Sacramento, participation in local mobile adoption events and features on Facebook, there was little interest in adopting her.

Fast forward to July. After residing at the Sacramento SPCA for three months, Gordie was invited with five other dogs

to a special mobile adoption "retirement party" for Tina Dungan, a twenty-one-year veteran at the Sacramento Regional Fire & EMS Communications Center (SRFECC). Tina's co-workers arranged the special event as a tribute to Tina's love for animals and long history as an animal foster parent. The adoptable animal party was a big hit and especially impactful to the two young children of Anna Meyer, one of Tina's co-workers.

Anna's children, Ben (age 13) and Karyna (age 10), enjoyed playing with all the dogs at the party but were immediately drawn to Gordie. During the event and the twenty-four hours following, the children begged their mom to adopt her.

Anna was also encouraged by her co-workers, including Tina, to take Gordie home.

Later that evening, Anna sat down with her children to discuss her concerns about the time and expense involved in adopting a pet and explained that they may only have a limited time with Gordie due to her older age. She brought up memories of their ten-year-old Pittie/Catahoula dog who had passed away four years earlier and explained that they would experience a similar heartbreak when it was time to say goodbye to Gordie.

**Ben didn't care at all about Gordie's age. His immediate response was, "If she doesn't have that much time, then at least the time she does have, she should be with a happy family."**

Ben's reasoning sealed the deal for their family. When Anna went back to the office the next day and shared Ben's response with her co-workers, they were overcome with emotion. Tina stated, "Ok, so if I bring Gordie to you tomorrow, you're going to be fine with it?" Anna replied, "Yes!"

The very next day, Tina went to the Sacramento SPCA to pick up Gordie and was overwhelmed by the number of staff and volunteers who came to say goodbye following an announcement over the lobby intercom, "Gordie is leaving the building, if you would like to say goodbye, please come up to the adoption counter."

Just three months into her new lease on life, Gordie enjoys a fairly simple routine; regular snuggle time with the family, playing dress up with Karyna and providing emotional support to Anna and her co-workers at the SRFECC, where Gordie spends her days. "We have a really stressful job," Anna explains, "there's a lot going on, people are dying on the phone with us every day, really traumatic experiences. It's nice to see that smile and have a dog to pet."

Everyone around the office knows Gordie and they all jump in to care for her needs, especially when Anna is responding to an emergency call. Gordie isn't the only pet at the office, there are several other employees who also bring in their dogs. "Gordie brings a smile to everyone's face that needs it



Anna & Gordie at the Sacramento Regional Fire & EMS Communications Center

around the office," Anna said, "it's very therapeutic."

When Gordie doesn't accompany Anna to work, she comfortably relaxes at home with her Miniature Dachshund sister, Abby. Anna and her family are so happy to have Gordie in their lives - she not only brings them joy, but does it without asking much in return.

**"I think that's one of the best parts" Anna happily adds. "Every kid wants a new pet or puppy; to adopt an older dog like Gordie, where you don't have to go through two years of chewing and fight through potty training is really nice."**

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- Ben Meyer

