

VOLUNTEERS IN THE NEWS

Local Rescue Effort Helps Man's Best Friend

Volunteer organization provides new life for Labs

By **Susan Cornell** January 15, 2011

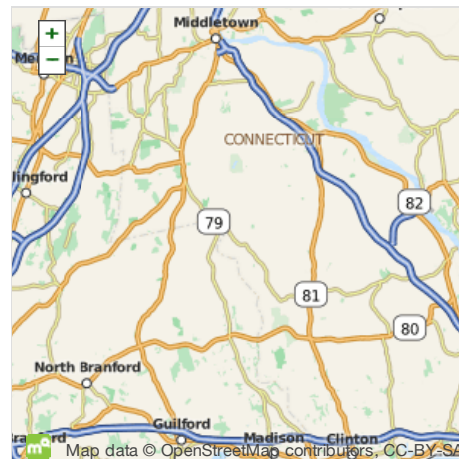
In 2001, a woman in Memphis, Tennessee sent a note to a Labrador retriever Internet discussion group to which Killingworth resident Cathy Mahle belongs. The note read: "Does Anyone Want These Labs?"

Mahle clicked on the link to the Memphis, TN Animal Shelter and saw the faces of two beautiful purebred Labs staring back at her. She investigated a little further and found not just these two purebred labs but several more just like them.

"In Tennessee, they are only given three days to be adopted. Some places we pull labs from don't even give three days, but take the labs, which are large, directly back to the gas chamber. As the owner of two rescued labs myself, I was stunned at the number of purebred labs and lab mixes in that and all of the other shelters in the U.S.," says Mahle, now the the Director of Labs4rescue, a nonprofit organization which provides a new life for displaced or rescued Labrador Retrievers and Labrador Mixes.



PHOTOS (4)



Mahle forwarded the message about the two labs to another group, and a woman in Maine replied that she would like to adopt them.

"We organized a rescue run transport, consisting of 18 different volunteer drivers between Memphis and Maine, and Chloe and Yellow Dog went to live on a lake in Maine," she said.

Volunteers repeated the cycle for about a year, bringing three to four labs every other week to their new owners. Gradually, they found more volunteers and homes for so many labs that professional transporters are now used to shuttle the labs from foster homes to adopters.

"We now adopt about 1,200 labs each year. We have adopted over 9,000 labs. Not only do we take labs from high kill, gassing shelters, but we have a very active local intake program which, unfortunately due to the poor economy, is taking in more and more labs," Mahle said.

Applicants submit an adoption application which lists several labs they are interested in, and adoption coordinators contact them for an interview. A vet check is done of the applicant and a home visit is made prior to finalizing the adoption. Home visits are usually done by previous adopters.

Labs4rescue looks for those who "love labs and will treat them as family members."

"Our labs can never be tied up or left outside alone. We do expect them to be kept on a leash in any unfenced areas as many were taken in as strays. If for any reason the adopter cannot keep the lab, they are contractually obligated to only return the lab to the rescue. We never want the lab to be homeless again," Mahle told Patch.

The organization finds out about their adoptees through an owner surrender form submitted through their website, www.labs4rescue.com (<http://www.labs4rescue.com/>).

"People needing to rehome their labs can fill that form out. Our local intake coordinator has contacts with many local animal control officers and works with shelters throughout New England. We also have volunteers in states as far away as Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana and Texas, where labs are still euthanized (in many cases, using gas) in very large numbers," she explains.

Prospective dog owners find out about Labs4rescue in various ways.

"We list our labs on [Petfinder.com](http://petfinder.com) (<http://petfinder.com/>). We also have local adoption events. Word of mouth is so important, so our adopters and fosters help tremendously with spreading the word on our mission," Mahle said.

The organization is a rescue, not a shelter. As such, the labs are in foster homes or boarding kennels in any of several different locations. Applicants can meet any labs currently located near their area. If the lab is outside of the area, there is a shuttle transport service.

Volunteers, including adoption coordinators, southern foster homes, and home visit coordinators are found throughout the country. In Connecticut, volunteers are charged with adoption events. While there is no brick and mortar office, Mahle hopes an adoption center in central Connecticut is in Labs4rescue's future.

If you are interested in volunteering, fostering, adopting or supporting Labs4rescue, the applications can be found at www.labs4rescue.com