

# CNY Group Seeks Help To Rescue Labrador Retrievers From The South

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OSWEGO, NY – “Save a Lab, have a friend for life!”

For those who heed this simple slogan, the results can be heartwarming for the rest of their lives.



Tara McKenney hugs Gracie as the canine graduates from obedience school recently.

“That is how I came across the Labs4Rescue Web site. I was very disturbed by what I read,” she said. That is when I made the decision to adopt a Lab.”

It was the first dog she ever owned, she noted.

Baldwinsville residents, David and Tara McKenney adopted “Gracie,” a 4-month-old chocolate Lab, who had been rescued from a shelter in Louisiana earlier this year.

Labs4Rescue hopes to save hundreds of other Labs from Southern shelters before the dogs are killed.

The Barnes & Noble Bookseller store, Route 31 in Clay, has joined forces with Labs4Rescue.

Labs4Rescue, an all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization is dedicated to rescuing and finding permanent homes for Labrador Retrievers and Labrador Mixes that are being routinely killed in gas chambers in Southern shelters, according to Tara McKenney.

On Sunday, Dec. 17 (11 a.m. - 7 p.m.) and Sunday, Dec. 24 (noon – 5 p.m.), Labs4Rescue volunteers will be available to wrap any Barnes & Noble purchases - free of charge. The organization will have information on its mission and slogan “Save a Lab, have a friend for life!”

They will gratefully accept any donations the public cares to make to their worthwhile cause.

Tara said she found out about Labs4Rescue while searching the Internet for information about adopting a pet.

If anyone wonders why this group, which has arranged adoptions for 4,731 dogs since its inception in July 2002 through Dec. 1, 2006, needs to be in the business of rescuing these popular dogs, “the answer is heartbreakingly simple,” according to Tara.

“There is a severe over-population of Labs in the South,” she explained. “They don’t enforce the spay and neuter laws strictly down there. When a Lab doesn’t continue to perform well for a hunter, the dog usually winds up dead and is easily replaced.”

According to Liz Morrison, a Labs4Rescue contact in Lake Charles, La., Labs and Lab mixes are the most predominant breed found in the high-kill shelters of the rural Southern and Midwestern areas of the country.

The breed is one of the most popular in the United States and many backyard breeders in the South try to cash in on this by creating small-scale puppy mills, she said.

Spay and neuter laws are not strictly enforced, and Labrador females often give birth to litters of 10-12 puppies, adding to the problem.

“Many hunters abandon their less successful water dogs in the field at the end of the season, or they shoot them,” Tara said. “Only the ‘luckiest’ dogs are left to be surrendered to shelters.”

If they wind up in a shelter, they have just five days; if they aren’t adopted by then, they’re killed, she said.

Many shelters in the rural South regularly put down up to 60 purebred Labs and Lab mixes each week. Nine out of 10 dogs surrendered are killed, often en masse, in gas chambers under inhumane conditions, Morrison added.

“I have seen the apparatus they use,” Tara said. “It looks like a refrigerator. They put the dog(s) inside, close the door, push a button and walk away. That’s so they don’t have to look in the dogs’ eyes.”

Of the approximately 10,000 dogs gassed from these regions last year, at least 7,000 were purebred Labs and Lab mixes, Morrison said.

“I don’t know why gas is used instead of the more humane injection (like in this region), maybe it’s a cost-savings thing,” Tara said.

Labs4Rescue founder, Cathy Mahle, a resident of Killingworth, Conn., adopted her first dog from a Missouri shelter several years ago and was shocked to find a purebred there.

Once she learned the full scope of the situation, she knew she had to do something.

Tara had the same sort of realization. The McKenneys have recently established a local chapter of Labs4Rescue – <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/unylabs4rescue/>

“Gracie is truly the love of our lives! To think that she could have been one of the thousands who were not lucky enough to be rescued, breaks our hearts. She has added nothing but joy to our home and we are committed to helping Labs4Rescue save as many other dogs as possible,” Tara said.

The parent organization has grown to employ a full-time professional transporter who delivers an average of 30 Labs a week to homes throughout the Northeast. To date, the group has rescued Labs from rural high-kill shelters in Tennessee, Louisiana, and Arkansas.

Labs are bred for hunting in the South, Tara noted. They are very popular pets in the Northeast, but there aren't as many as there are down South, she said.

"We're trying to promote awareness in this part of the country. We need foster homes, even if it is just for two to four weeks, to get the dogs out of the shelters to a safe place," she said. "We can move the dogs to a new foster home until we find a permanent home. The more foster homes we have, the more dogs we can save."

Gracie just celebrated her first birthday, and she and the McKenneys are looking forward to many more, Tara said.

The cost to adopt is \$350, which includes all vaccinations, the cost of spaying or neutering and transportation of the Lab to an area nearby for pickup.

Persons interested in finding out more about Labs4Rescue adoptions, sponsorships, or fostering can visit their website at [www.labs4rescue.com](http://www.labs4rescue.com) or speak with the volunteers wrapping their purchases at the Clay location of Barnes and Noble Booksellers.

"If people would just have their pets spayed or neutered, it would solve an awful lot of the problems. It's just so simple," Tara said.