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Santa's reindeer find competition in Lab named Rosie

Look up, he's on the roof

By Jean Fiore

Press writer

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STONINGTON – *You know Dasher and Dancer, Prancer and Vixen, Comet and Cupid, and Donder and Blitzen.*

*But do you recall the most famous*

*That's right, Labrador!*

*Sorry, folks. This isn't the story of Rudolph. Besides, you already know that story.*

*This is a new one, sure to become a classic like the other.*

*It all started two years ago in October 2005 when the Eck family – Wendy, Dave, C.J. and Morgan – adopted a Labrador mix named "Rosie."*

*Now Rosie wasn't your run-of-the-mill Labrador. She was special from the start. Her birthplace – New Orleans or thereabouts – had been devastated by Hurricane Katrina, and Rosie was a refugee.*

*She was homeless.*

*In stepped Labs4rescue, a Killingworth, Connecticut-based, nonprofit organization "dedicated to providing a new life for rescued or displaced Labrador Retrievers and Labrador Mixes," according to its Web site. The organization matched Rosie with the Stonington Village family.*

*"It was amazing," said Wendy Eck, "what we had to go through (for approval)." The Ecks had to fill out a five-page questionnaire and undergo a home visit.*

*"We're a licensed foster family," she said. "I think we'd pass muster for a dog!"*

*Within two months of being stranded on a rooftop surrounded by the rising waters of the mighty Mississippi, 5-month-old Rosie was wandering 'round the quaint streets and fishing piers of another coastal community – one with a bit of Northern charm.*

*"The story we were told about Rosie is that she and her siblings and owners were all rescued from a rooftop and had been there for a number of days. The family lost everything and could not keep the dogs," related Wendy.*

*Labs4rescue "did have some basic information (about the dog)," Wendy added.*

*"She was born in May '05 and her name was Rosie."*

*Though the family had not planned on getting a dog before (Hurricane) Katrina – and father Dave was reluctant to take on a dog in the space-constrained Borough – they relented due to pleas from youngest son Morgan, then 11.*

*"A family without a dog is like a family without children," reasoned Morgan. As fate would have it, Wendy learned of "a chocolate lab female puppy needing a home" right around the time that Morgan and C.J. were pressing for a pup.*

*"She was sick and skinny when we got her," said Wendy. But before long, Rosie grew strong and healthy and began sauntering out onto the master bedroom deck.*

*"We often have the doors open from our bedroom to the deck. We rarely have bugs and the view is unobstructed. Rosie liked to sit out there," explained Wendy.*

*Once Rosie was older and no longer required crating while the family was out, they would leave her "loose in the house and the door to the deck open so she could get some fresh air," said Wendy. Their yard is not fenced and they did not want to tie Rosie up for fear "she would bark and disturb the neighbors."*

*Within a few weeks of this, however, neighbors began telling the Ecks that Rosie was on the rooftop.*

*"Neighbors mentioned that she would sit perched on the peak of a small roof accessible from our deck," informed Wendy. "She does not do that when we are home. Maybe she looks for us from there."*

*Wendy believes that Rosie's attraction to the rooftop stems not only from her past experience as a Katrina survivor but that she also enjoys the view afforded her from the perch. "She likes to look out over the dog park," said Wendy.*

*Not far from the Eck house on Front Street is a small park at the Town Docks that Borough residents use for dog walking. It is adjacent to the sewage treatment plant. According to Wendy, Rosie likes to watch for her favorite playmates.*

*Moreover, Rosie is very fond of water and the Eck home looks out over Stonington Harbor. "She loves – absolutely loves – to swim," said Wendy.*

*Rosie is very gentle, loves being around their boys and "is a very fast runner," she added.*

*"We have had great dogs in the past," Wendy said, "but Rosie takes the cake."*

*She has brought so much joy to all of us."*

*Well, there you have it folks, the story of Rooftop Rosie. So next time you're touring the Borough, take a break from all that historical nautical stuff and walk on over to Front Street.*

*If not on the occasional run with Wendy down Water Street, you just might catch a glimpse of Rosie atop her perch.*

*Keep a lookout for a rather unusual weathervane standing sentinel over Stonington Harbor.*

*And, she'll go down in HIS - TO - RY!*

Labrador of all?

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